THE A. Brown

PLATONIC MARRIAGE:

A NOVEL,

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

By Mrs. CARTWRIGHT.

VOL. I.

LONDON.

Printed at the Logographic Preſs,

By J. WALTER, Printing-Houſe-Square, Blackfryars,

AND SOLD BY

J. Hookham, Bond-Street; R. Baldwin, Paternoſter-Row;

and W. Richardſon, under the Royal-Exchange.

M,DCC,LXXXVI.

THE PLATONIC MARRIAGE.

LETTER I.

MISS VILLEROY TO LADY GERTRUDE SPENCER.

THREE times have I taken up my pen to apologize for a silence as painful to my heart, as I am convinced it must be to that of my amiable friend; but have as often

been conſtrained to lay it down, from an inability to enter on the mournful detail with that compoſure which is neceſſary to give her a true idea of my unhappineſs, and ſpeak the ſad! ſad change! which a few ſhort months have produced in the fortunes of her Clara.

How tranſient! how fleeting! is mundane felicity! When we reflect upon the inſtability of all human enjoyments, who, my Gertrude, ſhall preſume to vaunt themſelves on thoſe empty profeſſions, which a ſingle breeze from the deſtroying breath of adverſity may blow away? who account themſelves bleſt, but they who poſſeſs thoſe mental treaſures, of which, neither the frowns of fate, or the malignancy of a cruel world can poſſibly deprive them?

The

The theory of philoſophy is what every one is acquainted with; the practice of it, what few are equal to; yet thouſands make it their boaſt, whoſe fortitude probably might not ſtand the teſt, were they deſtined a trial of its exertion; but if any degree of felicity under Heaven is enviable, it ſurely is that of thoſe few diſtinguiſhed beings, who poſſeſs that genuine philoſophy of ſoul which teaches them

"Ill firmly to ſupport."

'Tis a painful ſcience, and one, in which I fear perfection is very rarely attained, 'till after a long acquaintance with ſorrow; for though it is eaſy to be content when we have every reaſon to be ſatisfied with the diſpenſations of Providence, it requires ſomewhat more than human

reſolution to meet affliction with that equality of temper which diſtinguiſhed us in our happier days.

A novice in the ſchool of adverſity, I confeſs I have yet to learn thoſe approved virtues which ſo highly adorn the mind; I cannot forget that I was once happy, or ceaſe to lament that I am leſs ſo; yet had the misfortune I regret been ſent from Heaven, inſtead of man, I think I ſhould be more reſigned, and bear this ſudden tranſition from wealth to indigence with greater magnanimity.

Alas! whither does my ſorrow lead me? preſumptuous girl! is not the finger of God in every thing? and though man is permitted to be the inſtrument—our happineſs or

our miſery flows alike from the ſame omnipotent ſource, nor can we ſhed one tear of regret, which is not obſerved by that all-ſeeing eye, whoſe goodneſs none ſhall dare arraign.

Be calm then my grief-worn ſoul, and on the great diſpoſer of events reſt all thy hopes—to him hourly ſupplicate for that Heaven-born ſerenity, which helps us to repel the ſhafts of adverſe fate, and while repining at the bleſſings thou haſt loſt, be not forgetful, be not ungrateful for thoſe thou haſt left.

Ah! have I not yet many? an affectionate parent — a ſincere friend — a heart unconſcious of guilt—of theſe, I truſt, not even the roughеſt blaſts of adverſity can deprive me; for the ſincerity of my

Gertrude has been too long approved for me to ſuſpect, that any change of fortune can produce a diminution of her friendſhip—No, I will not wound her generous heart by the unkind ſuggeſtion, or think even for a moment, that the diſtance my inconſtant ſtars have placed between us, can the leaſt affect her eſteem; ſhe will not bluſh to acknowledge the poor diſpoſſeſſed Clara, labouring to ſupport a beloved father, independent of his enemies, more than ſhe would the heireſs of the opulent Villeroy—'tis groveling minds alone make thoſe diſtinctions, and a mean or unfeeling ſentiment never yet found admittance in a breaſt that is the abode of every virtue.

Yes, my friend, it is indeed true, that all which now remains of our former ſplendour, is inſufficient to pro-

procure us the conveniences of life, much leſs thoſe elegancies to which we have been accuſtomed.

I would tell you all, but my thoughts are ſo confuſed, my mind ſuch a chaos of unconnected ideas, that I fear I am hardly equal to the taſk. Ah! has not fame (which conveys ill news on eagles pinions, while good halt at every ſtage) long ere this wafted to England the tale of our undoing? doubtleſs it has; and pained by the vague intelligence you are this moment dreading its confirmation, or cheered by thoſe ſoothing rays of hope which ſometimes accompanies incertitude, determined to doubt its authenticity, and hourly anticipate a letter that may reſtore to your ſympathizing heart its wonted peace.

But alas! ſuch an one the fates have neither ordained me to write, or you to read; injuſtice and fraud have triumphed.

My unhappy parent truſting ſolely to equity, while his opponents made uſe of more ſubſtantial argument, had little to expect from a world that is ſwayed by intereſt—the event proved the ſuperiority of the latter, and he loſt the cauſe with coſts of ſuit, which from his ſanguine notions of ſucceſs, he had ſuffered to be carried to ſuch exceſſive lengths, that when given againſt him, he ſaw himſelf reduced to the confiſcation of his laſt remaining livre.

Thus ſunk the whole fabrick of our wealth, even the produce of the rich

rich furniture of our elegant Chateau au Bois de B——, and that of a ſmall houſe at Paris which boaſted no luxuries (for diſliking the buſtle of a city, my father never reſided there but when buſineſs particularly required his preſence) was the only poſſeſſion left which we could call our own.

In graſping at a ſhadow, he could not retain, the unfortunate Villeroy loſt the ſubſtance; for had he quietly yielded his eſtate when the fraudulent diſputant firſt attempted to overthrow the will of the donor, they probably would have been content without endeavouring to recover the emolument ſo many years back enjoyed by us—but oppoſition excited their revenge, and from the firſt moment in which they found

him determined to defend the ſuit, they reſolved to purſue it 'till his ruin was effected; for to humble him, became as much their incentive as intereſt.

But unleſs equity was on their ſide you will naturally aſk how did they overcome? Thoſe only, my Gertrude, who are better acquainted with the chicanery and knotty points of the law, than I am, can properly reſolve that queſtion. From the moſt perfect knowledge of the worthy heart whom no advantage could influence to be guilty of a falſehood, I alone draw my concluſions; as for him, whoſe nice ſenſe of honour would never even permit him to ſoften his counſel, by the uſual emolients on thoſe occaſions, when his all depended on their ſucceſs, it is

eaſy

eaſy to believe he had made uſe of no ſiniſter means to obtain the poſſeſſion of the diſputed property; the principles of a good man can no better diſplay themſelves, than by his life and diſtribution of his wealth; that which is gained by fraud, is generally diſſipated by vice; 'tis a corrupt ſtream that, however liberal it flows, ſheds no bleſſings on the participator; and even the charities it diſpenſes, loſe their uſual virtues, nor can prove a ſufficient veil for the diſhoneſty they are intended to conceal.

On the contrary, how acceptable to Heaven! how productive of happineſs to the receiver, is the benefactions of the upright ſoul! his mite is more effective relief to the diſtreſſed, than the moſt ſplendid gifts of guilt; for the bleſſings of virtue goes along

with it, and no lurking ſeeds of diſhonour deprive it of its worth; it is not a plant of oſtentation that receives its nouriſhment from hopes of worldly praiſe, but an exotic of purer growth, nurtured by the divine dew of benevolence, and aſpiring to God only for approbation.

How many drooping hearts has the ill-fated Villeroy cheered, who never knew to whom they were indebted? alas! who will now cheer his? even that power, I truſt, to whom he has proved himſelf a faithful ſteward; for never ſurely can it be deſigned by Providence, that a virtuous man ſhould ſuffer thoſe various ills, which to relieve in others formed his greateſt joy; a callous mind would juſtly merit ſuch affliction; but ſhall he experience the cruel

cruel pangs of want, whoſe daily pleaſure was to feed the hungry and cloath the naked!

" Teach ignorance to ſee and grief to ſmile!"

forbid it gracious Heaven! and grant to his ſupplicating child the power to ſooth his deſponding mind; enable him to ſupport with fortitude thoſe evils which are irremediable, and how to avoid the future, by every virtuous effort in her power.

I believe, my friend, you have often heard me mention thoſe particulars of my father's life, which led to the attainment of thoſe immenſe poſſeſſions of which the cruel hand of fraud has now deprived him; leſt you ſhould have forgot, in my next I will repeat them, as from that you may judge whether any one could

in

in equity believe themſelves better entitled to them—though the acts of villany and a biaſed counſel has given it in their favour.

But as I have now been ſome time abſent from him, whoſe only ſolace is the ſociety of his daughter, I muſt for the preſent throw aſide my pen till the hour in which he retires—would I could ſay to reſt! but that alas! will, I fear, long be an alien to his pillow—till then it muſt be equally a ſtranger to mine; for to behold the moſt indulgent of parents hourly ſinking under the weight of his afflictions, is a ſight which harrows up my ſoul, as it threatens a loſs ſtill more inſupportable than that of wealth, and leaves me devoid of every ſatisfactory reflection but that of ſtill living in the remembrance

membrance and friendſhip of Lady Gertrude Spencer, to whom it will ever conſtitute the ſecondary happineſs of my life, to ſubſcribe myſelf,

her unalterably devoted

though unhappy

CLARA.

LET-

LETTER II.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

A BELL from the neighbouring convent has juſt chimed the dreary hour of twelve. My two laſt have been employed in ſending to my father; for it is the only amuſement which can the leaſt detach his thoughts from thoſe melancholy reflections, that, if indulged, will, I fear, open for him an early grave; to divert them from the deſtroying ſubject is, you may believe, my friend, the firſt ſatisfaction of your Clara's heart.

He

He is juſt ſunk into a gentle ſleep —may it be long; may it be refreſhing; for much does he ſtand in need of that repoſe which inceſſant grief drives far from his wearied eyelids. Late as it is, I find no inclination to ſink into the ſame oblivion, ſhall therefore continue to converſe with my Gertrude, till Morpheus deigns to ſhed on mine his poppies,—and embrace this calm hour of ſilence, to fulfil my morning promiſe.

My father is the younger and now only ſurviving branch of a numerous family, born to more hereditary honour than wealth—moſt of whom, from the unthinking prodigality of their parents, (who, unwilling to diſgrace their noble anceſtry, lived far beyond their income) were conſtrained to acquire their fortunes by their merit;

merit; and entering early into the ſervice of their country, very ſoon loſt their lives in its defence.

There are but four paths open to thoſe whoſe birth ſets them above the ordinary occupations of life----the church, the bar, the navy, and the army; the former was moſt adapted to my father's diſpoſition, but ill adapted to the reduced finances of his parents, who lived too expenſively to leave themſelves the power of diſburſing much in the education of their offspring; he therefore choſe the latter, as likely to be productive of feweſt inconveniencies to them; and thinking preferment more certain (as merit alone ſeldom makes ſuch rapid progreſs in the pulpit as the field) and even though he might never gain advancement in the army,

of

of the two he judged it leſs humiliating to be a ſubaltern officer, than a poor curate.

At ſixteen they preſented him with a commiſſion in the ſame corps in which two of his brothers had before ſerved—had before fallen! the reflection freezes my heart; ſurely, my dear, they could not poſſeſs that tender affection which attaches moſt parents to their children! how different thoſe of mine to me. It puts me in mind of a ludicrous ſtory in my grammar, where a man begs a ſlip of the tree, on which the wife of his friend had hanged herſelf, that it might thrive as proſperouſly with his.

What were my grandſires ſentiments I know not, but it is evident to me

me they could not be very paternal; or the moſt flattering proſpects of promotion could not have induced him to venture a third ſon in a path, ſo fatal to his family.

But to leave animadverſions, and purſue the thread of my ſtory, it will be proper to tell you then, the regiment of my father being ſoon after ordered abroad, he left his native country, which he has never ſince reviſited; for in a few years death having diſſolved all thoſe ties of conſanguinity, which attach mankind to particular climes, (and having no inheritance but his ſword) he found himſelf as much at home in one quarter of the globe as another; and directed all his attention to the purſuit of thoſe hard earned laurels, which

which are too often a ſoldier's ſole reward.

He had ſeveral opportunities of ſignalizing his valour before he was twenty-ſeven, yet made but ſmall advancement towards a poſt of honour, while thoſe who had leſs merit and greater connexions, gained it by haſty ſtrides; a convincing proof of what he had not before ſuſpected, that in the army, equally as the church, preferment is often leſs the effect of worth, than powerful friends.

This diſcovery alone would quickly have diſguſted him with a military life, if another motive more prevailing had not determined him to quit it; but if the gates to promotion diſtended themſelves ſlowly on one ſide, on another was opened to him

him the moſt brilliant proſpects. During the time that his company was ſtationed in Flanders, coming home late one night, after ſpending the evening with a ſet of convivial friends, the moſt piercing groans of diſtreſs, from one of the bye ſtreets, on a ſudden aſſailed his ears; and his natural ſpirits, heightened by invigorating Burgundy, led him intrepidly to the ſpot, without beſtowing a thought on the danger that might poſſibly accrue to an individual, when oppoſed to numbers; fortunately he arrived time enough to ſave a life that was ordained by fate to ſtrew flowers on his own.

A ſingle weapon in the hands of one juſt perſon is ſometimes ſufficient to diſarm an hoſt of villains, ſo it happened in the preſent inſtance.

By the pale glimmering of the moon my father could diſcover that it was not a ſingle combat, ſome paces before he reached the place; and ſetting up a violent halloo! as if to give the alarm to others who were not far off, ruſhed, ſword in hand, upon the aſſaſſins, who, appalled by guilt, and ſuppoſing themſelves about to be over-powered by numbers, waited not for the reſult, but all haſtily made their eſcape, except him in whom the weapon had firſt been ſheathed, and he falling immediately to the ground, my father had nothing more to fear, than that he was come too late to ſave their unhappy victim, who had ſunk through loſs of blood, and appeared to be hovering on the brink of diſſolution.

There

There was, however, no time to loſe in aiming to recover him; the aſſaſſins might return, and taking advantage of their defenceleſs ſtate, ſtill perpetrate their horrid purpoſe, being ſtrong and of athletic make, his fears alſo giving him additional ſtrength, he heſitated not a moment what to do; but taking the bleeding ſtranger on his ſhoulders, bore him haſtily to his lodgings, which luckily was but a few ſtreets diſtant; and the ſervant of the houſe having ſat up for him, they jointly united their endeavours to aſſwage the blood, and after pouring ſome comfortable cordial through his paſſive lips, called up a ſurgeon to inſpect his wounds.

After ſome time paſſed in the moſt aſſiduous attempts to recover him, he began to be ſenſible of their humanity,

nity, but too weak to articulate the grateful effuſions of his heart; it was only by uplifted hands and ſilent ejaculations to Heaven, he was able to expreſs his gratitude.

The ſurgeon having dreſt his wounds, pronounced them not dangerous unleſs ſucceeded by a fever; to prevent which the greateſt caution was obſerved, and my father, however anxious to know who it was he had the happineſs of ſaving from a moſt ſhocking death, ſtifled every emotion of curioſity; and when he had ſeen him ſafely laid upon his own bed, and every alleviation afforded that was judged neceſſary to one in his unhappy ſituation, left him to the care of an attentive nurſe, whoſe tenderneſs he had himſelf approved in a recent illneſs, and retired

to another apartment to invoke that repoſe, which the fatigue of his night adventure rendered very eſſential to the preſervation of his health.

As ſoon as he awoke he ſtole ſoftly to the chamber of the unknown, and had the ſatisfaction to learn from the nurſe, that even the agony of his wounds had not prevented him from ſome ſmall intervals of reſt; and ſince he had received that refreſhment, the pains ſeemed greatly to have abated, and he had more than once expreſſed a deſire to ſee his deliverer.

My father then retired to dreſs, and ordering chocolate, immediately afterwards made his appearance in the apartment; the poor gentleman had cauſed himſelf to be raiſed on pillows

pillows to receive him, and as Mr. Villeroy approached the bed, extended his hand towards him, the grateful preſſure of which expreſſed more acknowledgements, than could have been conveyed in the moſt eloquent flow of words.

During their breakfaſt he found himſelf ſo much better, that he was able, without much interruption from pain, to relate the particulars of his horrid aſſaſſination, which as nearly as I can recollect, was to the following effect.

Happening to be ſome days before in a public company, he obſerved among the reſt a man whom he once remembered to have ſeen at the head of a deſperate banditti; and not knowing to whom he addreſſed

himſelf, unfortunately made this remark to an accomplice, expreſſing aſtoniſhment that mankind were ſo eaſily impoſed upon, as to admit ſuch vile characters into a reſpectable ſociety.

This obſervation not only proved that impoſition may be practiſed on the moſt diſcerning, but nearly coſt him his exiſtence; for the next evening that he was ſeen to go from his home his ſteps were watched, and in returning from the houſe of an intimate friend at a later hour than uſual, he was attacked by the before mentioned villains; and three of their companions who would probably have ſent him to that bourn from whence no traveller returns, had not Heaven ſent him a deliverer.

In

In the courſe of this recital, my father had the ſatisfaction to diſcover that he had ſaved the life of Mr. Van Budel, the moſt opulent merchant in Bruſſels; and which was of ſtill more conſequence, to one whoſe ſentiments led him to eſtimate merit more highly than wealth; a gentleman of as worthy character as any the place could boaſt; for though not perſonally known to each other before from a long reſidence in the ſame country, they were no ſtrangers by name; and the eulogiums of Villeroy's valour had as often been witneſſed by the ears of the merchant, as the praiſes of his own meritorious actions, by thoſe of my father.

An acquaintance begun with ſuch fortunate circumſtances on one ſide,

and ſuch heart-felt ſatisfaction on the other, it was not likely ſhould ſoon terminate. Van Budel mended every day, and his attachment to his deliverer hourly increaſed; his relations came in bodies to pay the tribute of acknowledgment to his valiant friend, and as far as profeſſions could go, he had every reaſon to believe their gratitude ſincere.

When able to leave his bed they propoſed to the merchant a removal to his own houſe, urging that he might there be better attended than in confined apartments; but to their utter aſtoniſhment, he abſolutely oppoſed their meaſures, determined to continue where he was, till his health was more perfectly re-eſtabliſhed, and expreſſed little anxiety to ſee any of them during his

his confinement, except an orphan niece, whom he had reared from infancy, and an elderly female domeſtic who had leſs claim to his friendſhip, from being diſtantly related to him, than her faithful ſervices to his beloved Mira.

'By them he was viſited daily, and when he judged himſelf ſtrong enough to return to his family, begged my father would diſcharge his lodging and accompany him home; adding that he ſhould ever after look upon him as a ſon, and take upon himſelf the future care of his fortunes. Such a diſtinction was a recompence far beyond his expectations, but too flattering to his heart to be refuſed; and the carriage which conveyed the generous Van Budel to his family-ſeat, was followed by

another laden with the military baggage of his newly adopted.

This arrangement, you may be ſure, was far from being grateful to thoſe mercenary relations, who had an eye to his poſſeſſions more than his happineſs; and laviſh as they had before been in praiſe of Villeroy's valour and humanity, they were ſtill more ſo in reprobating this extraordinary reward of his ſervices, which they then began to conſider as common ones, ſuch as every good chriſtian ought to render another; and would doubtleſs have been better ſatisfied had he been left to periſh by the hands of his aſſaſſins, rather than that a ſtranger ſhould have ſuch ſtrong claims on his gratitude, as to prove the means of depriving them of their glittering hopes, which had long

long been centred in the poſſeſſion of his eſtate, the only obſtacle to which had before been the innocent Mira; but another adoption quite veiled their proſpects, and cruſhed at once every ſordid expectation.

But here comes Dinah, our faithful and now only ſervant: an unlucky ſneeze has awakened the honeſt ſoul out of a comfortable ſleep.

Her young lady, up at this unſeaſonable hour! What can keep her waking? The good creature trembles for my health, and is unwilling to return to her bed till ſhe has conſigned me to my pillow. To quiet her well-meant fears for my ſafety can I do leſs than be governed by her intreaties; yet ſhall I reluctantly quit my pen; for like

thoſe whoſe piety perſuades them after an illneſs they ſhall not take cold by going firſt to a place of worſhip, I am half convinced there is that peculiar charm in converſing with a beloved friend, which takes even from midnight damps the power of extending themſelves to a heart ſhielded by affection.

However, I comply; health is too precious an endowment to be trifled with, and to ſuppoſe ourſelves proof againſt thoſe injuries our neighbours daily experience, ſhews a contempt to the divine beſtower.

Good night, then, my Gertrude, (or rather, good morning) to-morrow we'll reſume our converſation, and my father's hiſtory; till when I will endeavour to forget that fate ordain-

ed

ed him a happineſs more exquiſite than durable.

Reflection, amidſt ſuch painful circumſtances, is a foe to reſt; let it be baniſhed then; and hugging the ſweet idea, that I am ſtill richer than thoſe who are without a friend, let me ſink into the arms of ſleep, and invoke a temporary ſuſpenſion of thoſe unavailing regrets, which, maugre all the efforts of philoſophy, are too predominant in the heart of

Thy ill-fated

CLARA.

LETTER III.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I THINK we left my father juſt as he arrived at the noble manſion of his ſtill nobler minded friend, and thither my Gertrude, if you pleaſe, we will now follow him.

Mr. Van Budel had been many years a widower: his family conſiſted only of the niece before mentioned, who had but juſt attained her fourteenth year, a matronly houſe-keeper, and a ſmall number of domeſtics; who, from a long acquaint-

quaintance with his temper, ſo perfectly knew their duty, that he was probably better ſerved than if they had been more numerous.

The houſe was large and elegant; the furniture in a ſtile that did credit to the owner's judgment; neither crouded with coſtly ornaments, that ſeems rather to diſplay pomp than taſte, or devoid of any of thoſe nameleſs elegancies we look for in the manſions of the rich; yet nothing found a place in which utility was not blended with magnificence.

A library, filled with the moſt judicious ſelection of authors both ancient and modern, (and almoſt in every language) afforded an ample field for literary amuſement when diſpoſed to ſeek it; and in the ſame

apartment was diſpoſed every ſpecies of inſtruments a ſcientifical mind could wiſh. In furniſhing it Van Budel did not merely conſult the gratification of his vanity, nor were all his ideas confined to cent. per cent. for he had ſufficient knowledge both of men and books, to decide with propriety and taſte on any ſubject; he united in one the man of buſineſs and the man of letters; was as much enamoured of the graces as of Plutus; and, in a word, though in the wane of life, was a moſt acceptable companion either for youth or age.

With ſuch a friend, my father could not be unhappy; and it was with little reluctance he ſoon after, at the interceſſion of the merchant, diſpoſed of his commiſſion; not from his

his preference to a life of inactivity, but becauſe his regiment was every day expected to be ordered to a diſtant quarter; and ſo much had he endeared himſelf to that worthy man, that a ſeparation would then have been looked upon as the moſt inſupportable event.

Another motive, perhaps not leſs powerful than his benefactor's wiſhes, co-operated in rendering this propoſal pleaſing; the dawning graces of the youthful Mira began to make that impreſſion upon his heart, of which it had never before been the leaſt ſuſceptible, for any of her ſex; till then fame had been the only object of his purſuit, but the time was now arrived in which

"Mars muſt yield to Love the Field."

From

From his firſt arrival, he had been honoured by her uncle with the flattering diſtinction of her ſuitor, and in that character had every opportunity of diſcovering the growing beauties of her mind and perſon; the former every day diſcloſed ſome new perfection, nor could the infantine habiliments of the latter obſcure thoſe ripening charms, which, though not arrived at their meridian ſplendour, had a more powerful effect upon his paſſions, than probably would have been wrought by beauty more mature.

The firſt years of her life had been paſt in an adjacent convent; but fearing that a longer reſidence with the holy ſiſterhood might tend to bias her religious principles, Mr. Van Budel determined that her education

cation ſhould be finiſhed under his own inſpection, and with that intention had ſent for her home, juſt before the unhappy incident which introduced him to my father.

Finding that Villeroy excelled in thoſe elegant accompliſhments in which he wiſhed her to become more converſant, he gave himſelf no trouble to procure her other maſters, but left the cultivation of her talents ſolely to his inſtructions; could he have aſſigned him a more pleaſing taſk?

In the monaſtry ſhe had received the firſt rudiments of the politer arts, but it was reſerved for him to render her a proficient; never did pupil attend with greater pleaſure to the leſſons of her tutor, never did tutor

tutor watch with ſuch ſolicitude the expanding genius of his pupil.

Inſtead of betraying that laſſitude which generally accompanies intenſe ſtudy in one of ſuch tender years, ſhe was never ſo happy as when attending to his inſtructions, and counted with impatience thoſe moments which were devoted to other avocations.

Is it poſſible ſhe ſhould not excel, when Love became her inſtructor? when ſhe played or ſung, 'twas *him* touched the keys, ſwelled her gentle notes, and gave birth to the moſt ecſtatic harmony.

When creative fancy aimed to delineate ſportive nature in its moſt lovely dreſs, 'twas *he* that guided the ready

ready pencil, and gave to the glowing landſcape its moſt vivid tints.

Would ſhe explore the more ſcientific paths of knowledge, 'twas *he* that led her through the thorny road, and taught her to decypher a geographical chart with as little difficulty as many would a ſong; in ſhort, the little Deity preſided in her heart, and her every action, pronounced *His* influence.

She was the victim of *his* faſcinating powers long before ſhe ever knew the nature of her ſentiments, and would have thought herſelf guilty of ingratitude had ſhe loved with a particle leſs of tenderneſs, the friend to whoſe attention ſhe was ſo much indebted; nor was it to be wondered at, ſince the object who had awakened

awakened thoſe early ſymptoms of affection, independent of his aſſiduities in her improvement, had, both from his merit and perſonal attractions, every claim to her eſteem.

Theſe eulogiums on a parent might appear too partial, was I writing to a ſtranger; but my friend is not to be told that the unfortunate Villeroy was once handſome, ſince, though now verging apace towards his grand climacteric, ſhe has oft remarked thoſe traces of manly beauty which are yet viſible on his venerable features, nor has even the infirmities of age deprived his perſon of all its wonted graces.

The attachment which my father firſt felt for this lovely girl appeared to him merely the effects of gratitude

titude to her uncle, and that eſteem which every one muſt conſequently feel for an amiable object, whether of their own ſex or the other; but the *ennui* he experienced when from her, though engaged in the moſt amuſing parties, ſoon ſpoke forcibly to his heart the true nature of his ſentiments, and the diſcovery overwhelmed him with uneaſineſs.

That he was dearer to her affections than any perſon on earth (her uncle excepted) he had every reaſon to believe; but that conſideration, ſo far from giving him pleaſure, became his moſt diſſatisfactory reflection; fearing that when her partiality became viſible to Van Budel, the idea of his having endeavoured to ſeduce her unexperienced heart would of courſe enſue, and the loſs of

of his friendſhip be the certain conſequence; for the diſproportion of their ages left him no room to ſuppoſe ſuch an attachment would be approved, though the generoſity of his diſpoſition might overlook that deficiency in fortune, it was his own intention to repair.

Thus prejudiced on the ſubject, he determined in future to obſerve a more reſerved deportment towards his pupil; hoping, that if he could conquer his over imprudent paſſion, he might at leaſt prevent the growth of hers; and to that effect, avoided all opportunities of converſing with her, but at the general periods in which ſhe generally received her leſſons; and totally denied himſelf the indulgence of contributing to her amuſement.

Such

Such a change of conduct could not but be obſerved, even by the innocent, inexperienced mind, and every pang this ſelf-denial coſt her tutor, was more than equalled by thoſe which it inflicted on her gentle boſom.

Fearing that ſhe had unconſciouſly offended him, for ſome days ſhe kept it ſecret; but at length, unable to ſuſtain the painful emotions of her mind, ſhe flew to the cloſet of her uncle, and finding him alone, diſcloſed the ſubject of her ſorrow; begging he would endeavour to recover for her that place in her tutor's eſteem, ſhe had by ſome means or other unhappily forfeited.

"Alas! my dear uncle, I fear "Mr. Villeroy no longer loves me," cried

cried ſhe, with the moſt affecting *naiveté*; "for when my leſſons are "ended, inſtead of encouraging me, "he barely beſtows on me the tri-"bute of approbation; and if I aſk "him to accompany me on the "harpſichord, or German flute, "while I ſing thoſe ſweet airs in "which he has taught me to ex-"cel, he pleads ſome indiſpenſable "engagement, flies inſtantly out of "the room, and for whole hours I "ſee him not again. Whenever "we happen to meet in the garden, "he does not, as uſual, intreat me to "indulge him with a ſight of my "tulips or my hyacinths, but ſay-"ing he has letters to write, hurries "into the houſe and leaves me by "myſelf, pondering at the cauſe of "this diſtreſſing change. I would "aſk him what I have done to me-

rit

" rit his diſpleaſure, but he looks
" ſo diſtant, ſo grave, that even
" when the words are juſt breaking
" from my lips, I cannot aſſume
" courage to utter them, fearing
" that the queſtion ſhould ſtill of-
" fend him more. Do, dear Sir, en-
" deavour to reſtore me to his fa-
" vour: indeed, I cannot ſupport
" his unkindneſs; when I think of
" the pleaſure he before ſeemed to
" take in my ſociety, and the care
" with which he ſhuns me now, I
" feel ſo unhappy I know not what
" to do; I would not willingly
" give any perſon living reaſon to
" diſlike me, but the hatred of all
" the world would not affect me
" ſo much, as that of my tutor,
" whom I muſt love for ſaving your
" life, and the pains he has taken
" in my inſtruction." Here a flood

of tears prevented her from proceeding, and Van Budel, too well acquainted with the human heart, to miſtake the ſource from whence aroſe the affliction of his niece (though the lovely girl was unconſcious of it herſelf) ſtraining her to his paternal boſom, begged her to be compoſed, and no endeavours on his part ſhould be wanting to reſtore her to the happineſs ſhe ſo much regretted.

The ſame evening he took an opportunity of ſounding the inclination of my father, by telling him jocoſely, he had as yet but half diſplayed his friendſhip till he had given him a wife; immediately recommended to his attention a young lady who ſometimes viſited his Mira; adding, that if diſpoſed to marry, he did not

not know a more deſerving object, or one whoſe alliance would do him greater honour—" But, perhaps, my " dear Villeroy," continued he, " you have already diſpoſed of your " affections, and the fair Iſabella " diſplays her charms in vain—I " confeſs, I have long expected to " hear of your capture; for the " frequent ſociety of an amiable girl, " unleſs ſhielded by the image of " another, ſeldom leaves a ſuſceptible " heart untouched; and I do not " conclude you to be one of thoſe " inſenſibles who are proof againſt " the powers of beauty, when unit- " ed with mental charms. What " are your real ſentiments of Miſs " Vandedozen? Do I exaggerate " in pronouncing her all that's love " ly? But before I hear your opi-

" nion, I am perſuaded it is not un-
" ſimilar to my own."

" Indeed, my dear ſir, it is a ſub-
" ject on which I have never given
" a ſerious thought. Miſs Vande-
" dozen is, I believe, deſerving all
" thoſe friendly encomiums you
" have beſtowed on her; but the
" contemplation of her charms has
" produced in me no other effect,
" than that admiration which is the
" general tribute of beauty."

" That is to ſay, you behold her
" with as little emotion as you do
" Mira, my couſin Catherine, or any
" other indifferent perſon."

" Pardon me, ſir," replied my fa-
ther, his manly features ſuffuſed
with a conſcious glow, " I ſhould be
" the

" the moſt ungrateful of human be-
" ings was either Miſs Van Budel,
" or your worthy couſin, to be rank-
" ed under the denomination of
" thoſe people who are indifferent to
" me: every one who bears the leaſt
" affinity to my benefactor muſt be
" reſpectful in my eyes; and thoſe
" who are peculiarly dear to him
muſt have a warm place in my af-
fection.

" I doubt it not, my friend; but
" you knew we were only ſpeaking
" on the ſubject of the heart. As
" Mira is but a chit, and my couſin
" is an antiquated (though a vener-
" able) ſpinſter; I only mentioned
" thoſe to inſtance the nature of
" your feelings; for the lady in
" queſtion, had my niece been a
" few years older, I ſhould not

" have named her with Catherine ;
" but certainly the ſentiments we
" feel for old age and childhood
" muſt be near a-kin ; I therefore
" quoted them as objects quite un-
" intereſting to your paſſions, and
" conſequently beſt calculated to
" expreſs the meaning of what you
" would infer.——Apropos now,
" (ſpeaking of Mira) the poor child
" fears ſhe has offended you, and
" has engaged me in her cauſe ;
" with tears in her eyes lamenting
" her unknown error, ſhe has juſt
" deſcended from my cloſet."

" Good ſir, is it poſſible! Miſs Van
" Budel to think ſhe has offended
" me!—ſhe is too amiable to offend
" any one ; let me haſten to dry her
" tears. I am unhappy to have
" been their ſource; but ſhe ſhall
" have

" have no more cauſe to complain. " Heaven can witneſs, nothing is " more dear to my heart than her " felicity; to promote it I would " ſacrifice my own. But why does " the ſweet girl imagine I am diſ- " pleaſed? I hope my conduct has " not been expreſſive of unkindneſs, " if it has, I ſhall hardly forgive my- " ſelf."

" I know not whence ariſes her " apprehenſions, unleſs from not " being ſo frequently indulged with " your ſociety as formerly. The " dear child has been ſo acquſtom- " to your attentions, that the leaſt " remiſſion of them, alarms her with " the fear of having incurred your " diſpleaſure; and becauſe you have " condeſcended to contribute to " her amuſement as well as inſtruc-

" tion, forgets that her tutor may
" find more intereſting purſuits than
" in treading, with her, the flowery
" path of infantine pleaſures. As
" ſhe is of a gentle temper, and the
" leaſt uneaſineſs preys upon her
" health, I would wiſh you to ſet
" her mind at eaſe on the ſubject of
" her imaginary error: but I beg,
" my dear Villeroy, it may cauſe
" no reſtraint on your conduct. We
" muſt diveſt her of theſe childiſh
" prejudices; for I ſhould be ſorry
" that your reſpect for me ſhould
" be an inducement to you to ſa-
" crifice that time to her ſociety,
" you might paſs more agreeably
" with companions better adapted
" to your age: in my houſe you are
" perfectly at home, and to think
" yourſelf ſo is the greateſt compli-
" ment you can pay me: it will

" ever

" ever afford the moſt cordial wel-
" come to any of your own ſex you
" may think proper to dignify by
" the name of friends; and when-
" ever your heart is diſpoſed to make
" an election among the *other*, you
" will find in Van Budel the warm-
" eſt advocate in your happineſs;
" find him ready to promote it more
" eſſentially than by profeſſions.
" Had my niece been four or five
" years older I ſhould have been
" happy to have beheld her the ob-
" ject of your choice; but as her
" tender years preclude me from
" ſuch a ſatisfaction, I ſhould be glad
" to ſee you united to ſome deſerving
" woman, who (when Providence
" ſhall ſee fit to take from me the
" ſtage of life) would join with you
" in diſcharging towards her thoſe

" parental duties ſhe has received " from me."

" If theſe are your ſentiments, " my dear ſir," cried my father, almoſt breathleſs with his emotions, " I am happy indeed, ſince time " may unite with you in the com- " pletion of thoſe wiſhes you have " ſo generouſly expreſſed: yes," continued he, with that candour which never deſerted him, " you have " given birth to the moſt pleaſing " expectations; it is the dawning " charms of my lovely pupil that " leave me no eyes for any other " woman; even the idea of her " youth could not ſhield my heart " againſt the powerful faſcination, " but the fear of its diſpleaſing you " conſtrained me to conceal it, point- " ed out the abſolute neceſſity for " ſhun-

" ſhunning her beloved ſociety.
" Jacob ſerved ſeven years for the
" favourite daughter of Laban;
" happy would be the bondage of
" Villeroy, though extended to
" twice that term, was the amiable
" Mira to become his recompenſe.
" As you have permitted me to hope
" that nothing but that deficiency
" on her ſide, which time can re-
" medy, would render my alliance
" diſagreeable. Permit me to love
" her with the purity of a brother,
" till the arrival of that period when
" the ſanction of your generous ap-
" probation allows me to breathe
" warmer ſentiments; till then,
" will I be her friend and tutor, nor
" attempt to excite in her tender
" boſom an emotion, but ſuch
" as innocence inſpires. Should
" increaſing years ſhew to her other

" objects in a moſt pleaſing point of " view, without murmuring will I " reſign my happy proſpects, and " endeavour to procure for her that " felicity with another, which my " untoward ſtars ordained me not " form."

Here the animated Villeroy ceaſed to ſpeak; and Van Budel ſtraining him in an affectionate embrace, teſtified his ſatisfaction at the noble ſentiment he expreſſed. To his houſe he committed his beloved Mira, aſſuring him that nothing could give him greater ſatisfaction than the anticipation of that period, when prudence authorized a fuller completion to his wiſhes, and, till its arrival, recommended a continuance of that diſcretion which had hitherto marked all his actions, and rendered him

a more

a more deſirable protector to his niece, than any other perſon he had ever the happineſs of being acquainted with.

My father did not abuſe the confidence repoſed in him; from that hour he watched over his lovely charge with all that virtuous enthuſiaſm, which diſtinguiſhes ſincere affection from thoſe ſenſual paſſions which dethrone our reaſon. Every ſucceeding day increaſed his tenderneſs, yet armed him with greater reſolution to conceal it. In the end he was rewarded: the amiable object of his wiſhes, happy under his tuition, matured in wiſdom as in years, inſenſible to thoſe ſuperficial attractions which oftn cover an unworthy mind, ſhe beheld none worthy to become a competitor in her eſteem with her

her beloved Villeroy: too artleſs to adopt diſguiſe, her affection became viſible in all her conduct. Many were the offers of marriage ſhe received before ſhe attained her eighteenth year; but with becoming dignity ſhe declined them all, and frankly owned ſhe ſhould never wiſh to change her ſtate, till ſhe met with a lover inferior in no reſpects to him, who had taught her to diſtinguiſh merit.

Secure in her affections, with the ſanction of his generous benefactor, my father owned his paſſion; and before the expiration of her minority, Hymen made them one. They had been united about three years, when a fit of apoplexy unfortunately ſeized their worthy uncle: they beheld the moſt gloomy proſpect opened to their

their view. Happy in his ſociety, (for they had ſtill continued to reſide with him after their marriage), they looked not forward to the moment when death muſt break the bonds of friendſhip; but obliterated all ideas of futurity in the enjoyment of preſent ſatisfaction; nor till this unfortunate event did they reflect, that they muſt be one day ſeparated from the beſt of men.

He recovered from the grim tyrant's firſt attack; but foreſeeing he had not long to ſurvive, determined to ſettle his worldly concerns, that nothing might interfere to prevent thoſe generous intentions he had always propoſed in favour of his Mira and her huſband. Some weeks after, in perfect tranquillity of mind, he made his will, leaving to my fa-

ther and his heirs, whether male or female, the full poſſeſſion of his eſtates, chargeable only with a few inconſiderable legacies to ſome of his relations, a trifling annuity to his faithful ſervants who had paſt their beſt days in his ſervice, and a comfortable proviſion to his couſin Catherine, which, after her death, devolved alſo to Villeroy.

This deſervedly regretted friend lived about a twelvemonth after the above diſpoſal of his affairs, during which he never enjoyed long intervals of health: but unleſs immedily preceding his third fit (which carried him off) his faculties appeared entirely unimpaired, and he devoted himſelf both to his religious and domeſtic duties, with his wonted compoſure and ſerenity of mind.

It

It may be eaſily imagined, that thoſe relations whoſe expectations had been more ſanguine, did not receive Mr. Van Budel's legacy with that ſatisfaction, they would have welcomed a more conſiderable bequeſt; nevertheleſs they forbore any diſreſpectful reproaches on his memory, and, concealing their internal diſcontent for ſome years, lived on terms of amity with my parents; probably becauſe the principal witneſſes to his will were living, and they knew it would be in vain to attempt its litigation, till after their deceaſe.

After thirteen annual ſuns had rolled their diurnal courſe, and every progreſſive year beheld them happier than the former, the fatal hour arrived in which even the bonds of love

love muſt be diſſolved: a malignant fever ſpread its dire ravages through our family, and the firſt victims of its fatal vengeance, were my amiable mother and an infant ſiſter of three months old. Deprived of life's firſt bleſſing, my father long appeared inſenſible to every other; and in the tomb of his beloved Mira ſeemed to have buried all his joys. He had borne, with fortitude, the loſs of four ſmiling cherubs who had died preceding my birth. But this final ſtroke to his felicity was more than feeble nature could ſupport; and it was long before even the powerful aids of reaſon and religion could aſſuage his grief.

I was, at that melancholy æra of his hiſtory, about five years old; and my retentive faculties too weak to be

be impreſſed with the remembrance of thoſe events which, from the frequent repetition of Miſs Catherine Van Budel, have ſince been written deeply on my mind; but from her animated deſcriptions, can form a perfect idea of the ſituation, in which a fond huſband muſt find himſelf after ſuch an irreparable loſs.

This reſpectable relation was then far advanced in years; her affection for my mother had been bordering on maternal, and extended itſelf to every object who was dear to her: from the time of her couſin's death, ſhe had reſided at a pleaſant little retreat he had bequeathed her; and in a life of retirement, and the continual exerciſe of every chriſtian virtue, now preparing for a better world, when the death of Mrs. Villeroy recalled

called her again to the active ſcenes of life; and thoſe fleeting days which could not be prolonged beyond their ſtated ſpan, ſhe determined ſhould be devoted to the afflicted mourner.

The firſt ſtep ſhe took to drive him from the ſtupor into which the unreſtrained indulgence of his grief had thrown him, was to bring me continually into his preſence; and by my innocent careſſes and engaging prattle, I ſoon claimed that ſhare of his attention, which, if it did not weaken, at leaſt ſeemed to blunt the edge of his unhappineſs.

By the force of her pious reaſonings he began to look with calmneſs on his ſolitary proſpect; and though he could not ceaſe to regret thoſe of which he was deprived, beheld, with gratitude

gratitude to Heaven, the bleſſings it had left him.

Among the few you will believe, my Gertrude, that his child was not the leaſt: the care with which he watched over my infant ſtate, and his unwearied diligence to cultivate my opening mind, is the beſt proof of the ſincerity of his attachment for his departed wife, and bears equal teſtimony of his affection as a parent.

Such as I am, ſuch has his tenderneſs rendered me; and but for his parental attentions I had been as a blank (or rather ſullied) ſheet of paper, on which no perfect cha-racters are written.

With

With ſuch an opulent fortune, and a perſon ſtill more attractive, his alliance would have been deſirable in almoſt every family; but diſdaining the thought of a ſecond marriage, he transferred all his affection, from his Mira, to the remaining pledge of their happy union; and, for fourteen years, made the inſtruction of your Clara his ſole amuſement. Firm to this intent, he made choice of the Chateau au Bois de B——, as his conſtant reſidence (in preference to Bruſſels); as from its vicinity to Paris I might be attended by the more eminent maſters; and though bred in retirement, receive all the advantages of a public education.

The good old Catherine lived till I attained my fifteenth year, and then died full of days and full of honour;

honour; for ſurely, if honour is ever due, it is to thoſe who have uprightly trod the path of life.

It was about this time I had the happineſs to become acquainted with my Gertrude; and the ſeven months ſhe reſided in our neighbourhood were the moſt enviable of my life, as they taught me the pure ſatisfaction ariſing from mutual friendſhip.

It was about the time of your departure, that the phyſician who attended Mr. Van Budel died, and the diſappointed branches of his family, ſoon after entered into a formal litigation of his will, bringing the apothecary (who is a man profeſſedly attached to Plutus) as an evidence of his faculties being impaired

at

at the time he made it, and by the force of intereſt brought alſo the attorney over to their party.

My father truſting to equity, and conſcious of the rectitude of his own heart, at firſt, made very light of their unjuſt claims; the ſuit was purſued with vigour on both ſides. On that of the plaintiff, *ſoft paper* was the moſt forcible argument made uſe of; on that of the defendant ſimple *truths*, unaided by a *bribe*; in a balance ſo unequal, is it to be wondered, that the ſcale of intereſt ſhould preponderate? My Gertrude knows the reſt. I cannot proceed. When! when! ſhall I aſſume ſufficient compoſure to reflect on this diſtreſſing event without a tear!

. . . . . .

'Tis over, and my heart in ſome de-

gree reſtored to its wonted calm. I again reſume my pen; but what remains for me to ſay? Alas! nought but what will plant daggers in that of my ſympathizing friend.

Since the determination of the cauſe, the ſon of our perſecutor has had the preſumption to make the moſt humiliating propoſals to your Clara; Yes, my love; the woman, whom, before this triumph, he could not have aſſumed courage to addreſs as a wife, the vile monſter has dared to ſolicit as a miſtreſs, flattering himſelf, no doubt, that the diſtreſs to which their iniquity has reduced us, would render ſome degree of our former independence in any ſhape acceptable.

Ah ! little is the corrupt heart of the wicked able to diſcern the pure ſtream which runs in that of the virtuous; or would they not perceive, that afflictions, inſtead of humbling, exalt the mental frame; and if, (as he has been pleaſed to infer) my ſuppoſed pride prevented him before from urging his ſuit, ought he not to reflect ?—that

" Proud ſouls grow often haughtier in diſtreſs,"

Nor think, that what he believed would then have been contemned, though accompanied with honour, will not now be acceptable with infamy. Servile minded wretch ! let me obliterate the mortifying reflection.

'Twill be ſufficient to tell my friend, that this propoſal was received

ceived with the contempt which it deſerved; and all offers of ſervice from every part of the family rejected, as their mean triumph amidſt their proffered kindneſs, was too viſible not to diſcover an intent to humble, more than ſerve us.

Collecting together the little produce of our remaining poſſeſſions, like the ſcanty gleanings of the peaſant after an ample harveſt; with the little handful we retired to a ſequeſtered ſpot in the environs of Paris, and there are we ſtudying to reduce our minds to our lowly circumſtances.

Dinah, faithful ſoul, would not be prevailed upon to leave us; all the little ſavings of twelve years ſervi-

tude has ſhe inſiſted on joining to our trifling fund; and the reward ſhe requires is, the happineſs of attending us the remainder of her days.

Soon after our retirement a ſcheme ſtruck me, that I thought might enable us to ſubſiſt more comfortably; for even with infinite œconomy a bare ſubſiſtence was all then left us. Need I be aſhamed to own it to my Gertrude? No, let thoſe bluſh who have reduced me to this neceſſity, while I adore the Providence that impreſſed me with the happy thought, and endowed me with the uſeful talents, which aided by induſtry, may ſeem to make our *little*, more.

You have not, perhaps forgot, my friend, that your Clara was always

reckoned to excel in the amuſive art of embroidery; an uſeful one it is now become, and employs all thoſe hours which are now devoted to filial duties.

I had ſeveral remnants of ſattin by me, and thoſe I firſt wrought into waiſtcoats, work-bags and pocket-books; which, when finiſhed, my affectionate Dinah, with ſtreaming eyes took to try my luck at Paris; ſhe fortunately diſpoſed of all, and with beſt part of their produce purchaſed materials for future labour.

Thus ſucceſsful I had ſpirits to purſue my plan, and have ſince been indefatigable in my work. My father is as yet ignorant, that my in-

duſtry proceeds from any other motive than amuſement, and ſhudders with the apprehenſion that time will bring an end to our little pittance; nor can I at preſent aſſume the reſolution to acquaint him of the means I take to increaſe it; for much I fear the conſideration of exiſting by the labour of his beloved child would more deeply affect his ſpirits, than even the idea of approaching want.

Adieu, my deareſt Gertrude, I have written you an enormous letter; but a ſhorter one would not have ſufficed to have been ſo explicit, as our unhappy tale requires: as a proof that nothing but the melancholy recital it contains can render it unacceptable, indulge me with an anſwer not much

much leſs prolix; and you will give all the ſatisfaction her dreary ſtate admits to

Your affectionate

CLARA.

Addreſs for me at L—— near Paris.

LETTER IV.

LORD EDWARD CARTERET TO SIR FREDERICK DENBEIGH.

AH! Frederick, into what a dilemma have your friendly counſels precipitated me! By all the ſubtle dints of ſophiſtry you perſuaded me to believe, that a man not being deſperately in love with the woman he marries, is no reaſon why he ſhould be unhappy: it was ſufficient, you argued, that he preferred no other to her he gave his hand. Would Hymen inſure us from ever experiencing ſuch a preference

ference, I would heartily concur in your opinion, and go to the ſacred altar, attended by Lady Lucy Nugent with as little trepidation as I would to Almack's; but a little incident which has happened to me ſince yeſterday, proves to me beyond thy moſt powerful rhetoric, that every one has his moment of ſuſceptibility, and if it does not arrive before marriage, it will moſt aſſuredly overtake them afterwards. No bonds are ſtrong enough to bind the unfettered mind: a vacant heart, like a craving child, is ever gaſping for repletion; and ſooner or later the hour muſt come in which it will acknowledge, that all objects are not alike indifferent.

Yet the die is caſt; I have pledged my honour to my father (whoſe

heart is placed upon our union) to ſolicit the hand of Lady Lucy; and if I may credit appearances, there is little hopes of a rejection. That ſhe is a lovely woman, in point of external beauty, the moſt unprejudiced muſt allow; nor that ſhe is deficient of interior worth, I have not at preſent diſcovered, either from my own obſervation, or other peoples opinion. As to Lord G—, he extols her as a paragon of excellence; but my acquaintance with her ladyſhip has been too tranſient for me to decide with certainty on her character (as ſhe reſided chiefly in town before her parent's death; and ſince ſhe became my father's ward, has only paid us one viſit previous to this). Moſt women have two, ſome none; muſt I truſt my honour with either of theſe, the latter would have

the

the preference; as of all evils one would willingly chuſe the leaſt.

My nonchalance on the ſubject of this projected marriage, I ſhould imagine, cannot have eſcaped her obſervation; ſhe has now been at the abbey above a fortnight; in all which ſpace the effect of her charms have not been ſufficiently powerful to draw my attention one day from my rural ſports, in which I am generally accompanied by her brother, who is quite an Acteon in the chace.

In ſhort, I beheld her ladyſhip with juſt the ſame indifference as one does a fine picture, or any other beautiful piece of mechaniſm, which, while we contemplate in admiration of the artiſt's talents, leaves no im-

preſſion on the mind, but ſuch as a ſuperior effort of genius might immediately efface. Ah! would I could ſay ſo of all portraits; but there are doubtleſs ſome poſſeſſed of thoſe faſcinating powers which prompt us to overlook the merit of the artiſt in the admiration of his ſubject. My own heart, I fear, bears teſtimony to this remark; and though I never before believed that any picture could be eſtimable that was not the reſemblance of ſome one truly dear to us, yet I muſt confeſs, I have within theſe few hours, felt ſtronger emotions at the ſight of an inanimate piece of vellum, than any living object ever excited in my breaſt.

In returning laſt night from the chace, accompanied by Nugent, we gave our horſes to the ſervants, and walked

walked home through a ſmall copſe which lies contiguous to lord Spencer's park: a ruddy-faced milk maid, ſeated by her foaming pails, blithly chaunting out her woodland notes, ſoon engaged the attention of the giddy Archibald; and while he was liſtening to the pretty ruſtic, I purſued my courſe, ruminating on a ſubject, of all others, moſt calculated to increaſe that gravity, on which you have ſo often rallied me.

As I walked, a briar caught my ſpur, and in ſtooping to diſentangle it, I perceived a piece of white paper laying at the foot of an ancient oak, the roots of which ſpread themſelves quite acroſs the path.

Suppoſing it ſome rural billet doux, the cleanlineſs of which prognoſticated

noſticated it had not been long dropped; I took it from the ground, anticipating ſome amuſement in the peruſal of the artleſs ſcrawl; but, inſtead of a tender ſonnet penned by Corydon to Phœbe, my ſlumbering ſenſibility was inſtantly awakened by the portrait of the moſt angelic face that ever graced a human being. Such languiſhing blue eyes, ſuch ſoft ſilken eye-laſhes, cheeks glowing with their native red, and dimpled with ſuch bewitching ſmiles, that it was hardly poſſible to believe the picture was not alive. Gaping with incredulity, I ſtood, as if expecting that the ſpeaking lips would ſoon diſtend and ſhew a mind as lovely as the features: in a word, I gazed and wiſhed, till even the ſight of the original could little more have enſlaved my ſenſes, and

to

to whomſoever it might belong, determined never more to part with it.

I have ranſacked my memory in recollecting the features of all the beauties of the preſent age within my knowledge; but among the living annals of lovelineſs, ſuch a finiſhed form, I am convinced never ſtruck my eyes, or that indifference I have hitherto maintained would ſoon have been put to flight.

Not that every feature has that faultleſs exactitude which connoiſſeurs require to form a perfect beauty; but that attractive analogy of charms, that heavenly uniſon of dignity and ſoftneſs, which ſteals more quickly on the heart than the moſt

moſt finiſhed Medicis that ever painter drew.

It appears to have been recently done, and from its ſize intended, I imagine, to be ſet, either to adorn the waiſt or boſom of ſome diſtinguiſhed friend; but whether male or female, the fates alone can tell. Not the former, I muſt hope, though hope avails me nothing. However, there can be no breach of honour in indulging myſelf with the ſight of it; it will be the beſt ſecurity to Lady Lucy of my conjugal fidelity; for no living object but her from whom it was drawn, can, I am convinced, ever rival her in my affections.

You muſt get it ſet for me, if I can aſſume the reſolution to deprive myſelf

ſelf ſo long of the pleaſure of gazing on it, though probably I ſhall be ſoon in town, as Lord G—— haſtens me to bring matters to a concluſion; and it will be impoſſible much longer to avert the painful taſk of offering his favourite a hand, which cannot be accompanied by a heart. Alas! till within theſe four and twenty hours, I did not know I had one; but, perhaps, no great diſappointment will ariſe to her Ladyſhip from that deficiency, ſince ſhe has paſt the greateſt part of her time in a world which, in affairs of matrimony, is generally governed by motives of convenience, and can probably diſpenſe with that bauble which conſtitutes the happineſs of more unmodern couples.

Not

Not one more argument in favour of this irremediable evil for the life of your Frederick. You volatile fellows, who have a conſtant opium for your ſenſibility, in libertiniſm (or rather are born without any) may view the hymenial ſtate in a different light, to ſuch ſerious mortals as myſelf; but to me it appears full of horrors unleſs the roſes of ſincere affection ſtrews the endleſs path; for barely not to hate, is inſufficient to keep alive thoſe reciprocal attentions, which form all the happineſs of a married life.

Adieu! the farther I go, the more I involve myſelf in thoſe painful labyrinths of reflection, from which the idea of matrimony, connected with that of Lady Lucy Nugent, can never ſatisfactorily draw me; they muſt

muſt not be indulged; ſo wiſhing you unfeeling beings all manner of happineſs in the ſhape you moſt deſire, I am,

Dear Frederick,

Moſt ſincerely yours,

CARTERET.

LET-

LETTER V.

SIR FREDERICK DENBEIGH TO LORD EDWARD CARTERET.

St. James's Square.

FAITH, Ned, I am ready to exclaim with Sir Pertinax, "Why, what is the man about? Is it poſſible, that in contempt of the ſubſtance, you have egregiouſly fallen in love with the ſhadow; the reſemblance of one who perhaps never exiſted but in the painter's imagination; or if ſhe did exiſt, has probably long ſince been conſigned to the

the tomb of her anceſtors; for is it not as poſſible that this aſſemblage of faſcinating beauty, may have been copied by ſome ingenious damſel from an ancient portrait in her father's gallery, for want of better amuſement, as it is that it ſhould be the real likeneſs of ſome living Venus? For my part, I can form no idea of the nature of a paſſion that ſuch a phantom can create; nor do I wiſh to be ſuſceptible of ſuch delicate emotions; more ſolid gratifications for my money. Love at beſt is but an illuſion, which Hymen ſoon removes; no matter then whether it be a goddeſs, or a woman to whom we plight our faith, ſince time and the uſual ſatiety attending even the poſſeſſion of her we love, muſt aſſuredly reduce her to the ſtandard of the latter: but I for-

forget I am talking to one whoſe abſurd prejudices teach him to believe, that affection, when placed on a deſerving object, is inexhauſtible as the widow's cruſe. I grant your reaſon, did ſuch rare merit exiſt as is pictured in a lover's infatuated mind; but is not every woman akin, from the ducheſs down to the milk-maid? Caprice ſways them all. And ſhe who is moſt deſerving, is her that has learnt the art beſt to conceal her foibles. Otway ſays,

"Let marriage be the laſt mad act you do,"

but I am of opinion, to fall ſeriouſly in love is ſtill more ſavoring of madneſs; unleſs, indeed, it is with a *picture*, the frailties of which are concealed behind the vellum. Poſitively, Ned, you have a moſt excentric

centric taſte, to prefer this little bit of inanimation to the fineſt piece of mortality that ever graced a brilliant circle. Lady Lucy is here quite the ton; the miſſes all envying, and the men all dying for her. You will be thought a happy fellow to engroſs the attention of a woman ſo ſkilled in the monopoly of hearts; yet you contemn the conqueſt, and give not a ſingle thought to the happineſs which awaits you.

For ſhame, man, rouſe from thy childiſh lethargy; brood not over imaginary perfections, but contemplate thoſe which abſolutely exiſt; nor in pining after unattainable felicity, loſe thoſe of the preſent hour. Conſider matrimony as a part of your deſtiny, the accompliſhment of which is neceſſary to the happineſs of your family,

family, (whoſe hopes are placed on ſeeing their names tranſmitted down to poſterity) and while the roſes court your touch, ſeek not to diſcover the thorns that may lurk beneath them. It is too late now to recede with honour, and as your marriage appears inevitable, conſole yourſelf with thinking that as times go, you could not have made a more eligible election, had intereſt even been out of the queſtion: in fixing on Lady Lucy as his daughter, your father has not only had an eye to wealth; and when put in the ſcale with many mercenary matches, it muſt appear a very deſirable one, as there is youth, beauty, and every elegant accompliſhment thrown into the bargain.

The

The levity which runs through the former part of my letter, I hope you will forgive, and believe, that though I wiſh to laugh you out of your abſurdity, I am ſorry to be conſtrained to make uſe of any arguments unfavourable to your eſtabliſhed maxims which border too much on the ſentimental for your own repoſe.

When the preliminaries are ſettled we ſhall hope to ſee you among us, not to ſip of the opium you mention; for the character of a libertine is never well ſupported, but where it is conſtitutional; perhaps, (was it properly defined) miſapplied to me, for though I have ever treated love as an amuſement, my paſſions are not under ſo little ſubjection, but I ſhould

ſcorn every ungenerous means of procuring their gratification.

Time permits me to add no more at preſent, than that I am

Thine ſincerely,

F. DENBEIGH.

LET-

LETTER VI.

MISS VILLEROY TO LADY GERTRUDE SPENCER.

HOW ſhall I ſupport this diſappointment? two months elapſed, and no letter from my Gertrude! Is it poſſible, ſhe no longer loves her Clara; or has any unfortunate event impeded her receipt of my packet? Merciful Heaven, relieve me from this ſuſpence: of all loſſes but that of my beloved parent, the loſs of her friendſhip would affect me moſt. Not a foot approaches our little dwelling, but my longing

ear catches the illuſive ſound, and my impatient heart bounds with expectation. Alas! it paſſes, and leaves me as dejected as before; leaves me in an uncertainty of what is more intereſting to my peace to be informed of than any other intelligence on earth. But of all melancholy reflections I will not indulge that which is moſt painful; ſomething has certainly prevented my letter from coming to hand; a better fate may perhaps attend my next, and buoyed by ſoothing hope, I'll ſtill purſue our literary intercourſe.

Since the concluſion of my laſt, no material change has happened in our circumſtances; buried in this retired ſpot, we are fortunately hid from the obſervation of thoſe who knew us in our more proſperous days; and

and ſelf-baniſhed from the buſy haunts of men, forget the joys of ſocial life, in a conſtant intercourſe with our Creator.

My little undertaking has proved ſucceſsful as I could wiſh; but conſtant applications to ſuch ſedentary avocations is, I fear, no friend to health; for I feel a great deficiency of thoſe animal ſpirits which I enjoyed when my amuſements were more varied.

How would the fine eyes of my Gertrude gliſten, could ſhe peep into our humble cottage; in a ſmall room furniſhed with the utmoſt œconomy, (not one article of former luxuries remaining but an harpſichord) ſhe would behold ſeated on a matted chair her once ſplendid Clara ar-

rayed with all the characteriſtic neatneſs of her lowly ſtation, ſtudying to make a new creation bloom beneath her fingers; her venerable parent aſſuming that compoſure which is far eſtranged from his heart, beguiles the gloomy hours in reading aloud ſome pious author, while Dinah, attentive to their every ſenſe, aſſiduouſly prepares the frugal meal.

What an affecting ſcene to her who has beheld it ſo contraſted! but, indeed, my friend, there is not half thoſe pangs in poverty your ſympathizing ſoul may probably ſuggeſt; little ſuffices thoſe whoſe wants are few; I regret none of thoſe delicacies of which we are deprived; the appetite, unpampered with high ſeaſoned ragouts and expenſive dainties

ties, recoils not at wholeſome food, however ſimple in its nature. The uncoſtly habit in which I now appear, has all the conveniences of one more ſplendid; it ſits as eaſy, perhaps is more becoming; and was it not for thoſe unavailing regrets which rend the heart of my beloved father, I ſhould ſleep as calmly on my humble couch, as ever I was wont to do on a bed of down. I begin to perceive, that happineſs indeed conſiſts chiefly in idea; thoſe tumultuous effuſions of grief which uſed to burſt upon my heart are now huſhed into a ſettled calm; and if I cannot attain thoſe heights of philoſophy I envy, at leaſt I have gained ſuch victory over my paſſions, that in comtemplating on the felicity which admits us into a future ſtate,

I endeavour to forget the miſeries of the preſent.

I never go out unleſs to public worſhip, or, at the interceſſion of my father, accompany him in an evening walk; when I attend the former, I am ſo concealed in my dreſs that there is little danger of my being known; and the latter is ſeldom extended far beyond the environs of our ruſtic dwelling: am therefore, upon the whole, as much exempt from the prying eye of obſervation, as if ſequeſtered within the gloomy walls of a convent; a retreat I ſhould prefer to every other, was it conſiſtent with my duty and affection to the beſt of parents.

What

What aſylum, my Gertrude, ſo deſirable to the unfortunate? There, forgetting and forgot, they may calmly indulge their pious aſpirations to that beneficent being who alone can heal the wounded ſoul; breathe them uninterrupted by a world which daily preſents ſome new object to diſturb the heavenly intercourſe, and, either from ſubjects of real woe or imaginary pleaſures, draws the frail mind from its Creator to his creatures.

The ſatisfactions are certainly very inconſiderable that attend a life, the moſt virtuous efforts of which can extend no farther than to preſerve itſelf from want; yet, to live even under ſuch limited powers is the duty of every Chriſtian; and, not only to exiſt, but aim to be con-

tent and happy.—Severe injunction! to thoſe whoſe ſenſibility of heart inſpires them with a wiſh of living for others as much as for themſelves.

Alas! my Gertrude, in what elſe does happineſs conſiſt? All other pleaſures are illuſive; but thoſe which reſult from the reflection of a beneficent or noble action, raiſes us above ourſelves, and gives to human nature a foretaſte of thoſe pure delights, celeſtials only can deſire.

I fear all the philoſophy I invoke, and in part have ſo happily attained, would be inſufficient to reconcile me to this vale of trouble, was ſelf only the object of my exertions: but when I reflect that I have a parent, whoſe tender and affectionate care of me has ever been unlimited, and who regrets

regrets the loſs of wealth more becauſe it has diſpoſſeſſed his Clara of all thoſe brilliant expectations to which ſhe has been reared, than from any perſonal inconvenience; it inſpires me with pious fervour, and every faculty of my ſoul is exalted by filial gratitude. Inſtead of contemning my exiſtence, I hold it as a bleſſing which I cannot neglect to preſerve, without being deficient in every duty that religion and affection prompt; nor can ever ceaſe to be grateful to that Providence, who has ordained me to be the ſtaff of his declining years.

What is the loſs of riches, when put in competition with that of a tender father? Thoſe the revolving wheel of fortune may adventitiouſly ſupply; but ſuch a deprivation what

could compenſate? True, it is not permitted me to heal the ſick, or cloath the naked; but that God who ſees proper to deprive the afflicted of one ſource of alleviation, will doubtleſs reſtore it them by the means of another. All required of us in this ſtate of imperfection, is to perform thoſe duties which our abilities and circumſtances admit of; that of an affectionate child and a reſigned chriſtian is all now permitted; and in the ſteady performance of which I truſt no temptation that the world can afford will ever make me deficient.

A few lines more, and I muſt then bid my dear Gertrude adieu. My father having only in part received the value of my former elegant moveables of the broker to whom

whom he diſpoſed of them, is this afternoon going to Paris, to take the balance, which (if all the arguments I can make uſe of are effectual in working my well meant purpoſe) I ſhall very ſoon take an opportunity of prevailing on him, to appropriate to the purchaſe of a ſmall annuity for the remainder of his own life; as the conſideration of the capital being ſunk is no object to her, who is more anxious to ſee *that* made comfortable, than mindful of future intereſt.

That good Providence which has endowed me with abilities to increaſe our little ſtore, will, I truſt, continue to me the means of ſupporting, by my induſtry, the exiſtence it is his pleaſure to prolong: and the ſatisfaction of ſeeing a parent ſecured from

from want, is ſuperior to every other conſideration. Was we to live upon the produce of the money at common intereſt, it would not half procure the neceſſaries of life; and to reduce the principal muſt naturally be our reſource upon contingencies which would probably ſoon leave us deſtitute. On the contrary, by ſinking it, we ſhould receive a comfortable annual ſtipend, which, with the trifling addition of my labour, would give me the happineſs of beholding him ſtill in the enjoyment of a decent competency: ſixty livres a year would now be a princely income; it would procure him thoſe comforts declining nature moſt requires, and that, my Gertrude, is all I wiſh;—for the luxuries and ſuperfluous traſh of wealth, ne-

never ſhall I breathe one longing ſigh.

To ſee him reconciled to his humble ſtate, reſtored to appetite and reſt, forgetting the injuries of mankind, in the affectionate attention of his child, is all I aſk of Heaven.

"The world gives little, nor that little long."

O! may the loſs of affluence be the laſt affliction deſigned by fate to ſow the furrows of grief upon his venerable brow.—moſt ardently do I implore; and may the bliſs of contributing to his felicity be long, long permitted *me*.

I muſt now leave you, my friend; my father walks to Paris, and I have promiſed to accompany him a mile upon the road. Adieu then for the pre-

preſent; but before I ſend this ſhall probably fill another ſheet.

Yours unfeignedly,

C. VILLEROY.

LET-

LETTER VII.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

GOOD Heavens! my Gertrude, what can have detained my father to this late hour? 'Tis now near twelve o'clock, and he is not yet returned, though the diſtance is little more than a couple of miles; the buſineſs too which he had to tranſact was not ſuch as required a length of time; ſurely ſomething particular muſt have happened to occaſion this delay: yet 'tis no dangerous road; I will not anticipate misfortunes. Chance may have thrown

thrown in his way ſome old acquaintance, and the review of paſt occurrences, or perhaps the melancholy recital of his recent injuries has engaged him beyond the intended hour.—Hark! I think I hear his voice—ſome one is ſurely ſpeaking at the door to Dinah.

. . . . .

Alas! no, my friend; it was not him; the honeſt ſoul was holding long converſe with herſelf, as ſhe is ſometimes wont to do, when her thoughts are employed on any intereſting ſubject—praying, (I have no doubt) for the ſafefy of her revered maſter.

The moon ſhines reſplendently; its kindly beams will, perhaps, help me to diſcern him before he reaches home;

home; for from my window I can ſee the path ſome paces diſtant.

Ah! there he is—I behold him aſcend the ſtile which leads towards our cottage. Adieu, my Gertrude, I fly to welcome his return.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

In continuation.

Great God, ſupport me under the new affliction! I may now indeed, pronounce myſelf unfortunate—— for

"One woe treads upon another's heels,
"So faſt they follow."

All my comfortable proſpects are now vaniſhed;

"Like the baſeleſs fabrick of a viſion,"

and

and Poverty, with its attendant horrors, ſtares us wildly in the face —my poor father! how ſhall I adminiſter to you that comfolation I ſo greatly ſtand in need of myſelf?

Ah! my friend, the fates decide againſt us—how ſhall I make known to you the extent of our misfortunes? Words fly from my pen; yet few ſuffice to ſay, that we are ruined.—

The broker, treacherous villain! has embezzled our little property, and flown to England, (as it is imagined) but no one can with certainty inform us of his route. What a ſavage in human form! he who has taken ſo many thouſands of us in our days of affluence, to fleece us of a few poor hundreds, all that was left to ſupport a ſolitary exiſtence; if our actions

actions are recorded in the book of fate, this ungrateful deed will ſurely ſtand againſt him at the day of judgment.

The moment I beheld my diſconſolate parent, the cloud which hung over his venerable countenance announced to my foreboding heart, that all was not calm in his—but ah! little did I ſuggeſt the extent of our misfortune! Before I could get down ſtairs, Dinah had let him in; puſhing haſtily by her, I flew to his paternal arms, eagerly inquiring what had detained him ſo much beyond the intended hour of his return; when lifting my eyes towards his face, whilſt I anxiouſly anticipated a reply, I beheld on it the veſtiges of recent grief; and the chilling ſight at once deprived me of

all

all ſenſation; ſinking into the firſt chair I came to, for ſome minutes, I had not power to articulate another ſentence; but a plentiful ſhower of tears having reſtored me to my ſpeech, I had again the reſolution to repeat my queſtion.

Preſſing me affectionately to his boſom, while the big drops chaſed each other in quick ſucceſſion down his cheeks;

"'Tis in vain, my dear child, (ſaid my unhappy parent), "to at-"tempt a concealment of what "you muſt inevitably, ſooner or "later, become acquainted with; "but I would wiſh you would ſuſ-"pend your inquiries till to-mor-"row. 'Tis now paſt midnight; "I am fatigued; you are depreſſed in

" in ſpirits; we both have need of
" reſt. Let us retire to our reſpec-
" tive apartments, and in the morn-
" ing we will renew the melancho-
" ly ſubject."

—" O, no, my dear ſir, by all
" the affection you bear your Clara,
" deny her not the ſatisfaction of
" now blending her tears with
" yours, of weeping for thoſe cala-
" mities we only can leſſen by parti-
" cipation. Alas you cannot tell
" me any thing more dreadful than
" my forboding heart already pre-
" diſpoſes me to hear. Not con-
" tent with depriving us of affluence,
" Fate has to-day ordained you
" ſome perſonal inſult; this, I fear,
" is the ſubject of your grief."

—" Would

—" Would to Heaven, my child,
" I had no greater cauſe of woe;
" but God's will be done. In a word,
" we are ruined! The barbarous
" man with whom I intruſted our
" little all, has flown his country,
" and taken with him the whole of
" our dependance: every minute
" ſince I learnt the account of his
" flight has been employed in a
" fruitleſs attempt to gain ſome in-
" formation, by which I might trace
" the place of his concealment; but
" all inquiries are in vain! he ſold
" off his own property at the time
" he diſpoſed of ours, and with the
" produce of both is gone to ſome
" diſtant country, where, though
" the hand of juſtice may never over-
" take him, aſſuredly his conſcience
" will be to him a continual vulture.
" When every hope had left me, I

" ſet

" ſet out on my return; but feeble
" nature, unable to ſupport itſelf
" under this new affliction, ſunk
" beneath the heavy burthen; faint
" and fatigued, I laid me down on
" a bank; and but for the wiſh of
" embracing again my child, could
" have inſtantly invoked that awful
" minute which tranſlates the
" wretched to a ſtate of bliſs. It
" was with difficulty I afterwards
" purſued my path; my tottering
" limbs would ſcarcely bring me to
" our cottage. I am ſick; my head
" ſwims; I can no more---ſupport
" me to my chamber. Alas! ſoon
" my Clara, will you have no fa-
" ther to ſupport; may Heaven
" teach you to bear with fortitude
" the loſs."

The laſt words raiſed me from my ſtupor. During the whole time my afflicted parent had been ſpeaking, all my faculties had been congealed; I had neither wept or moved; but the ſenſe of his danger acted more forcibly on my heart; the ſluices of grief again were opened, and, deſiring Dinah to prepare him ſome comfortable refreſhment, (which appeared to be as neceſſary as reſt) I wiped away the falling drops, and led him inſtantly to his room, where I ſtaid the whole remainder of the night, dreading that each ſucceeding moment ſhould render me a miſerable orphan.

Happily the refreſhment he received re-lumined the languid lamp of life; and before the morning was far advanced, he ſunk into a gentle ſleep,

ſleep, interrupted only by his uſual deep fetched ſighs, which now, alas! are become too habitual ever to leave his couch.

By his ſide I write this melancholy account; it will probably, my friend, be the laſt letter you will long receive from me, at leaſt of any length; for work muſt now fill up every hour but thoſe which are employed in attending the bed of ſickneſs. All our dependance is now on the inconſiderable profit of my labour; for before this fatal journey to Paris, our ſtock of caſh was nearly exhauſted; and, unknown to my father, I unfortunately ſent alſo, by the hands of Dinah, my watch and other ſplendid valuables, to be diſpoſed of by the ſame unjuſt wretch who has deprived us of our proper-

ty, thinking to enhance the principal (by what then appeared to me uſeleſs) and the better admit of the purchaſe I had at heart. How little do even the dictates of prudence avail us in guarding againſt misfortune. Had I kept them we ſhould ſtill have had a reſource; but its in vain to look back to the paſt: the conſciouſneſs of acting with a view to the beſt, can alone conſole me. Adieu, my deareſt Gertrude, ſhould theſe ever reach your hands, think ſometimes of

Your afflicted

CLARA.

LET-

LETTER VII.

LORD EDWARD CARTERET TO SIR FREDERICK DENBEIGH.

CONgratulate me, Frederick, I am the happieſt being on earth (excluſive of him who is ordained by fate to poſſeſs the original of the lovely miniature before me). Lady Lucy has refuſed my proffered hand: no, hang it, that has too mortifying a ſound for the ear of vanity; let me adopt ſome leſs humiliating term: well then, ſhe has, *bona fide*, declined my addreſſes; not from a diſapprobation of

your friend neither; but abſolutely from thoſe motives of generoſity which few of the ſex have delicacy enough to be ſuſceptible of, whoſe heart is inclined to think favourably of the object.

Notwithſtanding continual hints from my father, that I was very remiſs in my attentions to his daughter-in-law elect; (and that even prejudiced as he perceived her ladyſhip was in favour of me) all the tender preliminaries of wedlock could not be diſpenſed with; ſuch an indifferent lover muſt inſpire her with ſtrange forbodings, that ſhe would find a ſtill more indifferent huſband; (and a multitude of other remarks which generally concluded with the epithet of inſenſible) I yet determined to wave the evil hour, nor

ſeal

ſeal my future deſtiny till I had convinced myſelf the fair phantom who had taught my heart to palpitate, was not of the Spencer family, and hope, which, from the ſpot in which I found the portrait, I had ſome ſmall ſubject to indulge.

From ſome political diſſentions, good neighbourhood had not ſubſiſted between us for near two years. On their ſide was exhibited the firſt ſigns of coolneſs, by a remiſſneſs in their viſits: and the natural *hauteur* of my father's diſpoſition, prompting him to eſteem every proof of neglect an inſult to his honour, immediately declined all farther connexions with the family: thus an agreeable intercourſe of many years ſtanding was interrupted by caprice; for ſurely there cannot be a greater ab-

ſurdity than in ſuffering public feuds to influence our private conduct. Unleſs all mankind were known to adopt their political principles from conſcience, then indeed it were prudent to maintain the ſame opinion in the cloſet as the court: but where every one acts from the dictates of intereſt and popular fame, more than from the influence of reaſon and unbiaſſed judgment, all diſputes ſhould be dropt at the door of the houſe, or the world muſt become as fluctuating in its friendſhip as its principles, and private diſcord become as general as public oppoſition.

For my part, I conſider the moſt elaborate eloquence of a ſtateſman, as I do the exertions of any other artiſt whatever labouring for ſuperiority in his calling, ſince oratory is

is certainly as much a vocation as any other ſcience, and ſerves to diſplay ſublimity of genius more than ſublimity of mind; it is the gift of Heaven, aided by liberal education, and as liable to be applied to bad purpoſes as good ones, unleſs the heart which accompanies it, is equally ſublime. The moſt able miniſter may be a bad man. We ſhould chooſe our friends from their private conduct, not their public principles; ſince thoſe who have any dependance on a court are conſtrained to adapt their ſentiments to their circumſtances; and the loud clamour of intereſt ſtifles imperceptibly the ſoft whiſperings of conſcience.

In a word, I conſider a courtier as only acting a fictitious part, and though I deſpiſe the means, pity him from the motive;—it is painful to

deſcend; and as public favour, is at beſt, little more than a mayoralty, he who cannot ſhift his opinions with the times has ſmall chance of maintaining an elevated poſt.

Heaven defend me from ever becoming a miniſterial tool; but my ideas of the uninterrupted ſatisfactions attending a ſtate of independence are a ſufficient ſhield againſt any temptations that may be offered me. Yet, though I wiſh ever to live far from a court myſelf, I do not wiſh to ſhun all ſociety with thoſe who do, while I can diſcover, under the political veil, private virtues in equilibrium with public foibles. Perfection is not to be expected in any human mind; a mixture of good and bad qualities are the lot of all; and if the latter does not preponderate, we have no right to complain.

Our

Our neighbour is upon the whole a valuable character; he loves his family, is indulgent to his tenants, pays his tradeſmen juſtly; and politics out of the queſtion, is an excellent companion. While the world affords ſufficient ſubjects, leſs liable to affect the temper, why ſhould thoſe ever be introduced? For me, I always leave the room whenever a ſocial party begin to loſe themſelves in parliamentary ſquabbles, as it is a topic on which I know myſelf as little able to hold a diſſertation, as a blind man upon colours; and I have no inclination to embroil myſelf in animoſities with my friends merely to ſupport an argument I am not qualified to confute.

My father, I believe, deſpairs now of ever making me a courtier, as he

has ſome time ceaſed to importune me on the ſubject, nor requeſts me, as formerly to attend him to the levee; but he declined it for a taſk almoſt as arduous when he attempted to render me a faſhionable lover.

"Ah! Ned," cried he, "the "other morning, I had expreſſed "myſelf with warmth on my aver- "ſion to every ſpecies of duplicity, "that ſincerity of yours will ſpoil "you for the world; had all men an "equal portion it might be uſeful; "but antediluvian as it's become, "can only help to render you ſin- "gular; there is ſuch invariable "analogy between your heart and "lips, that one would ſwear you "had never paſſed a day out of a "cottage. I declare, I am ſome- "times quite aſhamed of you; not "be-

" becauſe I am inſenſible that
" ſincerity is a virtue, but even
" virtue may be ſometimes out
" of ſeaſon, when circumſtances
" concur to render delicacy trouble-
" ſome."

—" May you never be aſhamed
" from a more diſgraceful motive;
" and pardon me if I aver, it is an
" error (if any) of which I hope
" never to be cured."

His lordſhip happening juſt then to be in a complacent humour, I ventured to hint my wiſhes of a renewal of our former intimacy with the Spencer family; alledging, that as the Nugents were on viſiting terms with Lady Gertrude, it would be impoſſible to avoid it after I was mar-

married, ſhould the intended union take place.

" Should it take place!—for my " part, I ſee nothing that can pre- " vent it but your own apparent in- " difference, which Lady Lucy can- " not fail obſerving, if you do not " throw a little more of the lover " into your behaviour. If you mean " to renew the acquaintance with " the Spencers as a compliment " to her ladyſhip, I have no man- " ner of objection; as any ſtep " which ſerves to diſplay a wiſh to " give her pleaſure, you know can- " not diſpleaſe me. I eſteem the " family; and as to our little *fracas*, " if his lordſhip is of my opinion, " it's long ſince forgot. I have heard " that Lady Gertrude is confined " from a pleuriſy in her ſide, and

" think

" think you cannot have a better " introduction, than by ſending to " inquire after her health."

This was juſt what I wiſhed: the ſame afternoon I diſpatched a complimentary card of inquiry, in the names of my father and his fair viſitor, and received a very polite anſwer, acquainting them ſhe was better. The firſt motion towards a reconciliation being made, it was very eaſily effected, and written inquiries were ſoon ſucceeded by perſonal ones: but, alas! the principal motives for this civility were not gratified; for out of the numerous group of females whom we met at the priory, not one reſembled the fair ſhadow I carried in my boſom; nor could I either by any direct or indirect means, ſatisfy my deſires of learn-

learning whether the ſweet original was known to any of them, leaſt the inquiry ſhould be attended with the ſacrifice of my treaſure; for a diſcovery of the owner, though it might have anſwered no favourable purpoſe, muſt neceſſarily have ſubjected me to the pain of reſtoring it, unleſs ſuch a diſcovery could have been been made by accident.

Once I flattered myſelf I was near acquiring the wiſhed intelligence, when, by introducing the topic of loſſes, one of the young ladies preſent mentioned a recent one ſhe had ſuſtained in the picture of a beloved friend.

"Was it a valuable one, ma-
"dam?" aſked I; my heart palpi-
tating

tating with its pleaſing expectation?

"In itſelf, ineſtimable, ſir; and "though enſhrined in diamonds, "that is the leaſt part of the loſs "which I bewail; yet I regret hav- "ing adorned it ſo brilliantly, as "that probably is the very cauſe of "the misfortune; for a portrait, "like a note of hand, when payment "is ſtopt, can be of no worth to "the finder, unleſs for the gold or "jewels which ſurround it."

This pertinent obſervation does not always hold good, thought I, appealing to my heart, which now palpitated as much from diſappointment as before from pleaſure.

Moſt

Moſt tales give birth to ſimilar ones; the recapitulation of loſs ſucceeded loſs; but not a word eſcaped which bore any affinity to that, of all others, I wiſhed moſt to hear related; a proof to me, that it belonged to none of them, or, at leaſt, it cannot at preſent have been miſſed.

Could I have diſcoverd the viſionary object of my admiration, and have found her in a ſituation to receive my vows, nothing ſhould have induced me to yield the ſweet hope of calling her mine; but as there was little probability of the former, and leſs, that two ſuch fortunate circumſtances ſhould concur to crown my happineſs, I began to look upon the lovely phantom as one of thoſe illuſive will-o'-wiſps that are ſet to

to draw travellers out of their way, and determined to aim at the completion of my father's wiſhes, ſince my own, on the ſubject of matrimony, were likely ever to remain imperfect.

With a very ill grace you may believe I ſet about the irkſome buſineſs, and uttered tender nonſenſe to my intended, with an air as *diſtrait* as if I had only been a deputed proxy from ſome diſtant lover, inſtead of the hero of the tale myſelf.

In one of thoſe fruitleſs attempts to appear what I was not, I was awakened from my lethargy by a loud burſt of laugher from her lively ladyſhip.

I ſtared, looked ſilly, and ſtammered out an inquiry concerning the cauſe

cauſe of this ſudden fit of riſibility?

"Is it poſſible your lordſhip can "aſk," was the reply; "did ever "bad actor awkwardly perform his "part without being laughed at?"

—"I ſhould be ſorry," affecting as much gaiety as herſelf, "to at-"tempt any character I could not "ſupport with dignity; nor ſhould "fear ſucceſs, when a teſt of my "abilities were required;" and taking her hand I imprinted on it an unmeaning kiſs.

"Then, my good friend, you "muſt never attempt to exhibit the "lover again, till appointed to play "the part with an object calculated "to ſuit you, from the neceſſity of

"en-

" endeavouring to give life to fic-
" tion. Nay, don't be grave, my
" lord, (ſeeing me begin to look
" creſt fallen) I am not ſo much the
" dupe of my own vanity as to think
" every man admires me, or that
" every one who profeſſes himſelf
" my admirer is ſuch: Nor could I
" be blind to the genuine effuſions of
" love, did they really exiſt, though
" my own heart might not happen
" to be affected by them. Your friend-
" ſhip will ever be eſteemed an hap-
" pineſs; more you have not to be-
" ſtow. That diſcovery has probably
" ſhielded my heart from experi-
" encing the pangs of unrequited
" love; for it would not have been
" an union with yours that would
" have ſecured my felicity, unleſs
" yours had been alſo centred in
" the alliance. The attentions of

" love

" love, and thoſe of common-place
" gallantry, or affected in compla-
" cency to a father, are too diſſimi-
" lar not to be eaſily diſtinguiſhed:
" the former flows ſpontaneouſly,
" diſcovers themſelves in actions more
" than in profeſſions, and are of a
" nature too peculiar to a real lover
" to be imitated by a pretended one.
" From the firſt hour in which I
" arrived at the abbey, it was not
" difficult for me to diſcern that
" the wiſhes of our friends would
" never be accompliſhed; and every
" day confirmed me more in the idea.
" After that diſcovery I was determi-
" ned to behold you only in the light
" of a brother; and from the known
" ſincerity of your diſpoſition, hour-
" ly anticipated ſome important
" confeſſion of a prior attachment
" to another, rather than profeſ-

" ſions of a feigned affection to my-
" ſelf. Your wiſhes of renewing
" your acquaintance with the Spen-
" cers, half perſuaded me that Lady
" Gertrude was the object of your
" ſtifled flame; but obſervation ſoon
" convinced me of my error: yet
" after the indifference ſo clearly
" evinced in all your conduct to-
" wards me, ſince I have been here,
" the leaſt of my expectations were
" the unmeaning declarations which
" have juſt eſcaped you. The word
" love was never more abuſed;
" henceforth, my dear Lord Ed-
" ward, let it be excommunicated
" from our *tete a tete*. I forgive
" you this one offence againſt ſince-
" rity; and now tell me, without
" the ſlighteſt deviation from its dic-
" tates, the motives of theſe ſud-
" denly aſſumed attentions: has the
" ob-

" object of your real ones proved
" cruel; or for ſome former follies
" had you determined to inflict upon
" yourſelf the penance of marry-
" ing a woman it was impoſſible for
" you to love?"

—" Neither; by all the hopes I
" have of your ladyſhip's future
" friendſhip and good opinion, with
" that ſincerity which I hope never
" more will for a ſingle inſtance for-
" ſake me, I aver, that I never yet
" ſaw the woman I could prefer to
" your lovely ſelf: yet forgive me
" if, at the ſame time, I confeſs I
" did not feel, even for the amiable
" Lady Lucy, that ardour of affec-
" tion I judged neceſſary to eſta-
" bliſh permanent felicity in the
" connubial ſtate. Attribute it to
" the natural inſenſibility of my
" heart,

" heart, or the perverſeneſs of my " deſtiny, which you pleaſe; for " without one of theſe had been in " fault, is it poſſible I ſhould have " preſerved my indifference, after " the moſt tranſient ſight of her " who, I have oft been told, leads " half the world in chains?" Her ladyſhip ſmiled, and, bluſhing, bowed her acknowledgement of this compliment; while I continued.

" Conſcious that my unfeeling " heart (not yet arrived at its hour " of ſuſceptibility) could not pay " that tribute to your charms they " merited; I ventured to expoſtu- " late with my father on the abſur- " dity of his wiſhing me to deceive " you with a feigned affection; and " begged he would not urge me to " a conduct that was not only baſe

" in itſelf, but muſt be produc-
" tive of unhappineſs to your lady-
" ſhip, ſhould your ſentiments of
" me happen to prove more partial.
" You know his diſpoſition; his hap-
" pineſs was intereſted in my com-
" pliance, and no objections would
" he hear. Love had little to do
" in matrimonial engagements; yet
" though it did not then exiſt in
" my heart, muſt of courſe ſucceed
" an union in which was concent-
" red the charms of beauty, noble
" birth and affluent fortune."

" For ſome time I liſtened to his argu-
" ments--but unconvinced--at length
" the more illuſive ones of a friend
" who knew my boſom ſecrets, de-
" termined me to ſubſcribe to his
" wiſhes; and truſting to what I be-
" gan to think a conſtitutional inſenſi-
" bility

"bility to love, I flattered myſelf I "ſhould be happier than many who "enter the ſtate with leſs indifference; "as inſtead of diminiſhed ardour, every "ſucceeding day muſt increaſe my "eſteem, and ſhew me, I could not "have ſelected a more deſerving ob-"ject, had my heart been conſulted "in the choice.

Piqued, as might be her vanity, in not having been able to inſpire me with warmer ſentiments; theſe conceſſions were received with a complacency that did credit to her heart: ſhe ingenuouſly confeſſed, that prejudiced in my favour, ſhe ſhould readily have encouraged my addreſſes, had ſhe not before diſcovered, that obedience to the wiſhes of a father alone prompted me to make them; and added, ſmiling, that ſhe hoped

one day to be amply revenged on me for my inſenſibility, by ſeeing me as romantically in love as the moſt ſighing ſhepherd in her train.

With a generoſity peculiar to noble minds, ſhe then determined to brave the anger of her uncle, by taking the miſcarriage of our purpoſed alliance on herſelf; and to prejudice her guardian with the belief that it was abſolutely declined on her part; intends ſoliciting his friendſhip in deprecating the diſpleaſure of the former, which well meant *fineſſe* muſt entirely obviate all ſuſpicions on the ſide of my father; and though he bewails the diſappointment of his hopes, there will be no fear of his diſcovering the ſource.

"I am

"I am independent," ſays her ladyſhip, "when once of age; but "with you the caſe is different; "therefore to preſerve the friend-"ſhip of your father muſt be our "object. Leave the matter to me, "and all for the preſent will end as "you could wiſh it: but let me "adviſe you, my friend, to be as "ſpeedy as poſſible in making an "election of your own, leaſt your "provident ſire, more anxious to "ſhackle you than you are to be "ſhackled, ſhould provide for you "another partner, to which your "heart may be as little inclined to "ſurrender itſelf, as to Lucy Nu-"gent."

Thus ſunk our amorous negociation into a friendly one; and, for the ſpirited, generous conduct of this

charming woman, I ſincerely wiſh ſhe may ſoon meet with a lover more calculated to do juſtice to her merit; for, according to her own words, (though my perverſe heart refuſed that tribute to her charms they ſo juſtly claim from almoſt every beholder) I ſhall ever love her as a *ſiſter*; and ſo ſtrongly has ſhe engaged my friendſhip, that ſhe might command my ſervices, even at the hazard of my life.

And now, Frederick, it is time to end my letter: in a ſhort time you ſhall hear from me again; in the mean while write if you have any thing worth communicating to

Yours,

CARTERET.

LET-

LETTER IX.

LADY GERTRUDE SPENCER TO MISS VILLEROY.

HOW unfortunate am I in being ſo long deprived of the only ſatisfaction a diſtant friend can enjoy, that of weeping at thoſe diſtreſſes which they are not permitted perſonally to alleviate. How unhappy, not ſooner to have aſſured my Clara, that neither time, diſtance, or the moſt cruel exertions of her malignant deſtiny, can ever diminiſh the friendſhip of her Gertrude; ever eraſe from her remembrance the happy days ſhe paſſed at B——.

Your letters, my deareſt friend, all reached my hands at once: but this minute have I finiſhed the peruſal of your firſt packet; nor will my impatience tell you how much I ſympathize in your misfortunes; permit me to go through the laſt, till I have acquainted you why I have ſo long been denied that ſatisfaction.

A dangerous illneſs has for ſome weeks confined me to my apartment; and at the moſt alarming period of my diſorder, your firſt letters arrived at the priory. My mother attentive to nothing but the recovery of her Gertrude, threw them careleſsly into one of the drawers of her commode; nor would, I believe, ever have recollected the receipt of them, had not the pleaſure I expreſſed on the ſight

of your laſt; and my emotions, after breaking the ſeal, on reading the few firſt lines, occaſioned her to inquire why I was ſo affected?

"Oh! madam, my dear Clara is "unhappy; ſhe has written to me "before, and from her letters having miſcarried, ſuggeſts that I no "longer love her; fears that her "misfortunes have deprived her of "my friendſhip! Did ſhe know "that I am yet a ſtranger to her "diſtreſs, how pained would be her "gentle heart to have wounded mine "by this ſurmiſe."

This exclamation at once recalled to the memory of her ladyſhip, your former packet.

" My dear child, I am extremely " ſorry I ſhould have forgot to give " it you ſooner ; but I really be- " lieve I have now by me a letter " from Miſs Villeroy, which was de- " livered juſt at the criſis of your " diſorder, and my fears for your " ſafety obliterating every other re- " flection, I never ſhould have re- " collected it but for the receipt of " this ;" and ſlipping to her dreſſing-room, ſhe inſtantly produced your affecting epiſtles.

Words are inſufficient to paint the agitation of my mind, on learning the deciſion of a cauſe we never even heard was in diſpute. Never ſure was ſuch iniquitous proceedings ; if ſuch is law, where muſt the injured look for juſtice ?

My

My dear ſuffering friend, how do I commiſerate your fate. My Clara toil for her ſupport! Great God, can it be true? She who cloathed and fed ſo many, want means to indulge the benevolent emanations of her heart!

Such an event is almoſt ſufficient to ſtagger the moſt ſettled principles; for though taught to believe, that every change in life is ordained by the will of an all-wiſe Providence; yet, ſince virtue is ſaid to render us acceptable in the ſight of Heaven; when we behold guilt triumphant, and innocence depreſſed, is it not enough to impreſs us with the belief that all is the effect of chance, rather than the diſpenſations of a benificent Creator?

Ah! let me retract the impious ſuggeſtion, and conſole myſelf with thinking, that the misfortunes of my Clara are only ordained as a temporary exertion of her virtues, which muſt become ſtill more radiant when purified in the furnace of affliction. —"God tempereth the wind to the "ſhorn lamb," ſays poor Maria; and he doubtleſs proportions alſo our fortitude to our ſufferings;—gives to the mind a calm for every ill, and enables us to extract ſweets from bitters; otherwiſe how would the gentle delicate frame of my amiable friend, reſiſt the painful ſhock of ſuch a ſudden change; precipitated at once from the height of affluence and ſplendour, to the humble vale of obſcurity and daily labour.

How

How do I venerate your good old Dinah; the honeſt zeal of ſuch a faithful creature, at an age in which intereſt is the general view, would endear her to my heart, as much as I am convinced it does to hers, who eſtimates the valuable qualities of the mind, beyond the fineſt accompliſhments in the univerſe.

Rarely do we meet ſuch inſtances of fidelity. Like thoſe inſects which play but in the rays of the ſun, and are diſperſed by ſudden clouds: proſperity ſhews us many friends, which adverſity withdraws: a ſincere one, in any rank of life, is therefore too eſtimable not to be cheriſhed.

A little plan has juſt occurred to me, which I think, my dear, would be more advantageous than diſpoſing

of

of your embroidery at Paris.—I will finiſh your laſt packet, and then communicate it to you.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

O, my Clara, what a cruel fate is yours; I have wept over your diſtreſſes till I can hardly ſee to finiſh my letter, the emotions of my heart varying every ſucceeding line. One minute I am exalted beyond myſelf in admiration of your pious reſignation to your humble ſtate, and filial affection to the beſt of parents; the next charmed with the calm ſerenity in which you ſpoke of the intended means of ſecuring him from want: but when I came to the part in which all your virtuous hopes are blaſted by the hand of ingratitude and villany, my blood froze within me,

and

and I could hardly aſſume courage to peruſe the reſt.

What a dreadful ſituation; your injured father on a bed of ſickneſs, and no dependance but on the produce of your work. Ah! what hardſhips may you not have ſuſtained even before this can reach your hands; the moment it does reach them, let me intreat my beloved friend, to make uſe of the incloſed letter of credit on Meſſrs. R—— to ſupply preſent contingencies, and aſſure herſelf, that if any thing can ſupport my ſpirits under the knowledge of her affliction, it is that of being permited to ſoften thoſe ills which Omnipotence only can remove. Often have you heard me expatiate on the indulgence of my parents, nor did I exaggerate—their tenderneſs and generoſity enables me

to

to obey the dictates of my heart without the leaſt inconvenence to myſelf; therefore, if Gertrude Spencer has that place in your friendſhip ſhe is ſanguine enough to believe, do not, my deareſt girl, from any refined ſcruples of delicacy, refuſe her the ſatisfaction of accepting the trifling ſervices ſhe offers; between friends they are inadmiſſible; and would you not wiſh me ſtill more wretched than I ſhall remain till I again hear from you, deny me not the moſt convincing proof I can receive, that my ſincerity remains unqueſtioned.

My haſte to diſpatch this will not permit me to expreſs half the pangs I feel in the reflection of your misfortunes; or with what alacrity I would fly to yield my Clara perſonal conſolation,

ſolation, did not the watery element divide us: but I truſt there needs no profeſſions to perſuade her, that in adverſity, as in proſperity, ſhe will ever poſſeſs the undiminiſhed eſteem and warmeſt affections of her ſympathizing

GERTRUDE.

P. S. Inſtead of attending ſo aſſiduouſly to her embroidery, let me intreat my beloved friend, that the preſervation of her health may employ ſome ſhare of her attention. I have thought of a ſcheme for the diſpoſal of your little works of ingenuity, that will render ſuch intenſe application leſs needful, than when you depended on promiſcuous purchaſers. You know the partiality of our country for foreign productions,

(nor

(nor is it to be wondered, ſince in works of genius you certainly ſurpaſs us) permit me then to be your agent; and I ſhall have the double ſatisfaction of obliging my acquaintance and diſpoſing of your merchandize to more advantage than you can poſſibly do at Paris.

But whatever you do, let not your attention to this buſineſs prevent you from devoting ſome portion of your time to avocations more ſalutary to your health than a conſtant application to your work; as a little well diſpoſed of, will anſwer all the end of perpetual labour. Remember it is the requeſt of your Gertrude, that no more is ſent to Paris; and another requeſt ſtill more conſequential to her repoſe is, that when the purple amarynth and glow-

ing

ing roſe-bud blooms beneath your finger, you will not forget that too diligent attention to your frame fades the roſes on your cheeks; and that the injury done to nature can never be redreſſed by art: above all, think that the pleaſure I ſhould experience in contemplating the animated productions of your hands, will be loſt in the reflection of the wearisome hours you have paſt in bringing them to perfection; and in pity to my feelings, if not to her own eaſe, let that prevail on my Clara to work leſs, walk more, and believe that ſhe cannot give a more convincing proof of her affection than in accepting chearfully my little efforts to ſerve her; as the pleaſure of doing it could be exceeded only by that of ſeeing her again in a ſituation to render ſuch ſervices unceneſſary. Again,

my

my deareſt friend, adieu: may your valuable parent be ſoon reſtored to a ſtate of convaleſcence, and your afflictions be only a probationary eſſay of your fortitude and virtues, will be the continual prayers of

Your affectionate

G. S.

LET-

LETTER X.

LORD EDWARD CARTERET TO SIR FREDERICK DENBEIGH.

W. Abbey.

HA! Ha! Ha! was ever ſo ludicrous an interdiction ſeriouſly penned?

In paſſing our houſe-keeper's parlour juſt now, I obſerved a bible lay open upon the table, and taking it in my hand, with a view of ſeeing to what part of the ſcriptures the good woman's attention was directed.—

The

The firſt ſentence which ſtruck my eyes was

"You muſt not marry your "grand-mother."

I think Mrs. Meadows the Highgate exception, "unleſs you like "her better than her grand-daugh-"ter, might be added with much "propriety," ſaid I, laughing, and was abſolutely going to make that emendation, by interlining the words, had not the pious ſoul looked ſo viſibly agitated, leaſt I ſhould prophane her book, that I could not have the heart to purſue my joke.

I could ſee as plainly written on her features, as if ſhe had pronounced aloud the interrogation, "Mer-"ciful Heaven! is is poſſible my "young

"young lord, whom I thought the "pattern of ſobriety and every other "virtue, can make jeſt of the holy "bible?"

"No, Mrs. Meadows," replied I, —as if ſhe had really articulated this ſilent ejaculation, "I revere the ſa-"cred truths it contains, much as "you do yourſelf, though delivered "in an age in which neither ſcrip-"tural facts, or the moral reflections "which accompanies them, were "indebted to elegance of language, "or ſentimental beauties; but yet "it is not in nature to reſtrain an "inclination to riſibility, when one "reflects that it once was abſolutely "neceſſary to enforce ſuch prohibi-"tions. Our anceſtors muſt certainly "have ſtrange antediluvian notions, "to prefer age to youth. Did you

"ever

" ever in your life perceive in your-
" ſelf a wiſh to be united to your
" grandfather?"

—" Why no, my lord," relaxing a little from the gravity which her ideas of my impiety had inſpired, " I cannot ſay I ever did; but all " people's inclinations are not alike; " it is therefore neceſſary ſuch in-" terdictions ſhould remain in force, " ſince, what is not very probable, " may once in a century happen to " be poſſible."

—" True, true, there is no ac-" counting for taſte: ſome part of " mankind delight in antiquities; " ſuch of courſe would prefer the " mouldering relicks of an antient " Venus, to the youthful charms " of the moſt blooming beauty—

" every

" every man in his humour, you " know."

And I left the good chriſtian to make what comments ſhe pleaſed upon my levity; but doubt I ſhall not very ſoon recover my credit in her opinion; for though only a paſſage at the fag end of the bible, ſtill to have laughed at any thing in ſacred writ, is I dare ſay, as heinous an offence in her opinion, as to ſpeak againſt the ſtate in the dominions of his Pariſian Majeſty.

Should I ever find myſelf attracted by the irreſiſtible charms of one of theſe prohibited antiques (an event which I think is not very likely to happen, as I have not the happineſs to be bleſt with a grandmother), I will apply to my lovely miniature as

Stern did to the Monk's horn-box, to preſerve me againſt the faſcination, and truſt in that I ſhall ever find a ſhield to defend my heart againſt the allurements both of youth and age, unleſs the former appears to my longing eyes in the attractive form of this charming phantom.

Laugh at my folly, if you pleaſe, Denbeigh; but ſeriouſly, I worſhip this inanimate miſtreſs more religiouſly than ever did pious catholic the relicks of his ſaint; and to wean my affections from it would be a taſk more arduous, than towe an a man of pleaſure from the gayeties of life.

When I come to town, which I believe will not be in the courſe of a fortnight (as the Nugents talk of leaving us about that period); we will

will traverſe together every place of public reſort, for the young and beautiful, in hopes of finding this phœnix of female ſweetneſs: yet it will be a reſearch from which I ſhall entertain no very ſanguine expectations; as ſomething whiſpers my heart, that in the boſom of retirement, (a more fruitful ſoil for innocence and beauty), the exotic blooms; ſhould its whiſperings be verified, my probation is not likely to be very ſpeedily terminated; as nothing but accident can diſcover to me my happineſs; and accidents in our favour do not ſo frequently occur, as thoſe of a leſs pleaſing nature.

I had almoſt forgot to tell you how my father ſupported his diſappointments:—(this ſweet ſhadow

drives all ſubſtance from my thoughts) indeed, Frederick, he bore it moſt ſurpriſingly. Lady Lucy ſo prettily pleaded her antipathy to matrimony, and ſo earneſtly intreated him to be her champion in the cauſe of liberty, that he became intirely the dupe of our fineſſe, and began ſeriouſly to believe, that a coolneſs on the part of her ladyſhip had firſt given birth to the averſion I expreſſed, when ever he preſſed me to fulfil his wiſhes.

Greatly as his heart was fixed upon this alliance, his pride was too much piqued by her ſuppoſed inſenſibility to the attractions of his ſon, to admit of an argument in favour of his hopes, when the generous girl declared to him, the ſex were all alike indifferent to her; and till her heart

heart experienced a warmer attachment than it had hitherto done for any of her lovers, ſhe could not think of entering into an engagement that was to laſt for life. He calmly wiſhed ſhe might meet with one more deſerving than him, on whom it had been the united wiſh of her family that her choice ſhould fall; aſſured her, that on his part, no reſtraint ſhould be laid upon her inclinations; and added, ſhe might depend on his endeavours to reconcile her uncle to a ſimilar way of thinking.

The ſame day his lordſhip ſent for me to his cloſet; but before he acquainted me with what had paſſed between them, aſked gravely, how went on my love affairs?

" Not at all, ſir; her ladyſhip " ſeems to have no ear for the ſub- " ject; at leaſt, I do not ſeem to be " the object deſigned to awaken her " affections."

—" They muſt be very lethargic " ones then, I am inclined to think, " (ſurveying me with an eye of " parental partiality) yet her coun- " tenance ſtrangely miſinterprets " her feelings; for an hundred " times I have thought I could diſ- " cover in them the warmeſt predi- " lection in your favour. I am glad " however, ſince it happened ſo, " that your own inclinations did not " prompt you to purſue the mat- " ter more anxiouſly; for I have " no notion of feeding the vanity " of theſe inſenſibles, by an appear- " ance of diſappointment. To tell

" you

" you the truth, ſhe has this morn-
" ing acquainted me with her diſin-
" clination to matrimony; and beg-
" ged me to intercede with Lord
" M— to relinquiſh all thoughts
" to the propoſed alliance, as ſhe
" had never yet ſeen the man with
" whom ſhe could be happy. De-
" ſirous as I was of bringing you
" together, you may be ſure I af-
" fected as much indifference as her
" ladyſhip, and aſſured her I ſhould
" never make uſe of the authority
" of a guardian, either to reſtrain,
" or influence her inclinations; and
" ſince that was the ſtate of her
" heart, wiſhed ſhe might make a
" more agreeable choice. I could
" almoſt have added, that I believed
" no ill conſequences would ariſe
" from your diſappointment; but
" I thought that would be ſaying

" too much, however dictated by " truth."

—" I am very ſorry you did not, " ſir; for why ſhould we reſent a " determination that has prudence " for its baſis? Was every one " thus reſolved againſt marriage, " till called upon by their heart to " make an election, the number of " divorces would be leſſened, and " married lovers ceaſe to be a phe- " nomenon. If any thing could in- " creaſe my attachment to Lady " Lucy beyond the medium of " friendſhip, it would be this proof " of her good ſenſe; for ſurely a " woman cannot betray a greater " proof of inſenſibility, than to ac- " cept the hand of a man ſhe can- " not love."

—" Pho!

—" Pho! pho! marriage, Ned,
" is a political inſtitution; and
" among the great, leſs intended to
" cement the happineſs, than intereſt
" of the parties; love is only de-
" ſigned as an amuſement for the
" Damons and Phillida's of the
" paſtoral ſcenes; it ſhould have
" nought to do in the life of a man
" of faſhion, who can always find
" ſufficient to intereſt his thoughts,
" without the painful refinements
" of a paſſion that ſpoils him for
" the world. You will one day, I
" hope, think differently than at
" preſent: inſtead of an averſion to
" each other, one would have ima-
" gined that the ſimilarity of ſenti-
" ment between my ward and your-
" ſelf, would have inſtinctively at-
" tached you; but no matter, ſince
" it does not happen ſo, we muſt

" look out for another as rich and
" beautiful, who is not quite ſo
" difficult to be charmed."

—" Is marriage then a part of
" one's deſtiny, ſo eſſential to be
" fulfilled, whether inclination
" prompts, or not? I do not at
" preſent find the leaſt deſire to
" change my ſtate; therefore muſt
" beg your lordſhip will not take
" that trouble."

—" Certainly it is, who would
" wiſh their title ſhould become
" extinct? and on your marrying,
" properly reſts all my hopes of ſee-
" ing mine honourably handed down
" to poſterity."

—" If that is the principal mo-
" tive for your anxiety on the ſub-
" ject,

" ject, I truſt, ſir, it will be an-
" ſwered quite as well ſome years
" hence as now; at preſent, the
" greateſt bleſſing I am ſenſible of,
" independent of your affection, is
" liberty;—by and by, perhaps, my
" ſentiments may alter."

Some company being announced, interrupted our curious harangue, and left me to my reflections.—How ſtrange, Frederick, that mankind ſhould be leſs anxious to tranſmit their virtues than their titles; leſs fearful of ſullying the pure channel of the former, than diſgracing the latter; but ſo it is! noble birth and large eſtates, in an alliance for their children, is generally conſulted before the riches of the mind. I cannot, however, condemn mine, of overlooking that deficiency in his

recent choice for me: but yet it is with me a moot point, whether, had her ladyſhip leſs abounded in the graces of the mind (all other circumſtances concurring to render the union deſirable) he would have made that an objection.

The matter, however, has happily terminated, though not, (as moſt novels do) in wedlock. And platonic ſyſtem, which is much more to my inclination, has ſucceeded it.

When we come to town, (as Lady Lucy and her brother reſide with her uncle Lord M—, during the minority of the latter) we are to be on the moſt ſocial footing, and I hope ſhall often ſee you in our parties. We are juſt going to celebrate the anniverſary of Sir Patrick Melvin's

vin's nuptials. You know his lady; they are a worthy couple; doubly ſo, becauſe unfaſhionable:—if ever I marry, may the return of my hymeneals be welcomed with the heart-felt ſatisfaction which ſeems to attend theirs:—if appearances and their own avowals may be credited, after an union of thirteen years, they enjoy all thoſe pure delights which Thomſon ſo delicately annexes to his deſcription of virtuous love. Lady Lucy is in raptures at the thought of aſſiſting at the feſtive ſcene. Adieu.

Ever yours,

CARTERET.

LET-

LETTER XI.

MISS VILLEROY TO LADY GERTRUDE SPENCER.

AFTER the moſt cruel ſtate of inquietude that ever deſpondent heart experienced, I have at length the felicity to find I ſtill live in the remembrance of my Gertrude; am ſtill dear to her affections; and the certainty of being ſo, conſoles me under every misfortune: her welcome aſſurances of unalterable friendſhip now lay before me; I peruſe them again and again, yet cannot ſufficiently feaſt my eyes with the delightful

lightful truths; the ſatisfaction they inſpire me with, can only be damped in reflecting on the cauſe which ſo long retarded it: happy is it for the children of affliction, that fate does not expoſe all its evils to their ſight, or your poor Clara muſt have ſunk under the blended calamity of a tender parent's ſickneſs, and the danger of a beloved friend.

How ſhall I expreſs thoſe acknowledgements which ſwell a heart unable to ſpeak its gratitude: indeed, my deareſt Gertrude, there needed not the generous proof, with which your letter is accompanied, to convince me of the ſincerity of an attachment I could never doubt, but when the clouds of deſpondency caſt a veil over my reaſon.

With

With pleaſure ſhould I obey thoſe kind injunctions which reſult from a friendſhip as delicate as ſincere, had not a train of unexpected events, ſince I wrote my laſt, occaſioned a material change in my affairs, and rendered it at preſent unneceſſary for me to make uſe of your note on Meſſrs. R———. You have wept at our afflictions, and will, I am ſure, my dear, rejoice at our good fortune, when I tell you, that in the hour when we thought even Providence no longer intereſted in our preſervation, and impiouſly abandoned ourſelves to deſpair, Heaven raiſed us up a friend; ſuch a friend, as next my Gertrude, muſt ever poſſeſs the tendereſt place in my eſteem.

Ah! has he not preſerved my father, ſaved me from the united

pangs

pangs of ſeeing myſelf a wretched orphan, and the moſt affectionate of parents a ſacrifice to want?

The miſeries which affected your gentle heart, on the peruſal of my laſt, are far inferior to thoſe I have ſince experienced. My malignant fate, not then at its criſis, relaxed not its ſeverity, till the burthen of my woes became ſo heavy, that death was the only proſpect which afforded conſolation.

Ten days I attended the bed of my afflicted father, who with the remains of our ſhattered fortune, ſeemed to have loſt all his fortitude; and unable to ſuſtain the bitter load of grief which preyed upon his heart, yielded to its deſtroying impulſe, till it had nearly brought him to his grave.

grave. Judge the diſtraction of your unhappy friend; her ſmall remains of caſh exhauſted; no reſource for a ſupply but by the labour of her hands, (which conſtant watching rendered impoſſible to procure) and the hourly proſpect of want before her eyes: add to that, her inability to procure ſuch medical aſſiſtance as the melancholy ſituation of her parent ſeemed to require, and you will believe there could not exiſt a more wretched being; unleſs it were one who to the inflictions of Providence, united a conſciouſneſs of deſerving them.

With the utmoſt difficulty I finiſhed a beautiful waiſtcoat that was near completion, and fearful that the produce when diſpoſed of, would not be ſufficient for our ſubſiſtence till

till I was able to attend more aſſiduouſly to my work, I collected together ſeveral trifling articles of the ſuperficial part of my wardrobe, and giving them to Dinah begged ſhe would endeavour to diſpoſe of them alſo; or ſhould ſhe not meet with a purchaſer, try to borrow a few livres on them for our preſent ſupply; as I was not only deſtitute of money for our houſehold expences, but in daily expectation of being called upon for the rent of our little cottage.

The poor creature took them up ſeveral times, watered them with her tears, and then laying them down again, looked ſo pathetically upon me (as if to make compariſons between my preſent appearance and that of thoſe happy days in which ſhe

ſhe had beheld me adorned with the ornaments I was now going to ſacrifice to our neceſſities) that her diſtreſs communicated itſelf to my heart; and though I experienced not a pang from the idea of parting with the uſeleſs trappings of vanity which lay before us, ſuch a combination of painful reflections ruſhed inſtantly into my mind, that my tears flowed on as faſt as hers; and to hide my emotions, I ran out of the room, deſiring her to loſe no time in theſe unavailing regrets, but haſten to Paris, and do her beſt in diſpoſing of her merchandize.

She took them up with as much reluctance, as a perſon who is driven by diſtreſs to commit an act of guilt, and, reſpiring a ſigh expreſſive of her feel-

feelings, turned out of the houſe with a heavy heart.

From my window I ſaw her walk acroſs the firſt field; and when ſhe had reached the other ſide of the hedge, believing herſelf unſeen by any one, but the Omnipreſent Being to whom ſhe addreſſed her prayers, ſunk upon her knees in the attitude of ſupplication.

My ſenſations at beholding the faithful ſoul in this affecting poſture, may be far better conceived than they can poſſibly be expreſſed: in a few minutes ſhe aroſe, apparently purſuing her journey with re-animated ſpirits; and wiping away my tears, I repaired to the chamber of my declining parent.

He

He had juſt awoke from a refreſhing ſleep; and the calm ſerenity of his countenance prepoſſeſſed me with the pleaſing idea of his being better than I had beheld him for ſome preceding days.

"Come here, my Love," ſaid he, extending his emaciated hand, "I feel myſelf inſpired with un-
"uſual ſpirits to-day; my heart
"ſeems to have ſhaken off its load;
"ſit down by my bed, and I will
"tell you a dream I have juſt had,
"that I am preſuaded is portentous
"of ſome unexpected bleſſing."

I ſeated myſelf by him, and having with difficulty prevailed on him to take ſome ſmall refreſhment, leaſt too much talking ſhould exhauſt his ſtrength, he proceeded (in a voice

more firm than he had ſome time ſpoke) to give me a particular account of his viſionary ſcenes.

"I thought, my dear Clara, we "were both lingering on a life of "penury in this obſcure retreat; "myſelf gradually ſinking into the "ſilent grave, and thou toiling for "daily ſuſtenance; the wind blew, "the rain beat againſt our cottage, "which too ſlightly built to ſuſtain "the rude ſhocks of Boreas, we ex-"pected momentary would tumble "on our devoted heads. Dinah "trembling for our ſafety, exerted "all her ſtrength to ſupport the "tottering ſtructure, and praying "ardently to Heaven to preſerve "us from the threatened danger, "methought her pious ejaculations "reached the throne of mercy:

"of

" of a ſudden the winds ceaſed,
" not a breath of air was ſeen to agi-
" tate the ſurrounding trees; and
" the ſun breaking inſtantly from
" the before impenetrable clouds,
" ſhone ſo reſplendent on our hum-
" ble dwelling, that its benign in-
" fluence communicated the warmth
" even to our hearts; and I found
" myſelf ſo much reſtored to vigour
" that I left my couch, and walked
" with you to the door, that I
" might contemplate with grati-
" tude, the ſerene beauties of the
" azure element.

" At that minute, a man of vener-
" able aſpect appeared upon our threſ-
" hold; his veſtments were ſuch as
" are worn by terreſtrials; but the be-
" nevolence which illumined his ma-
" jeſtic

" jeſtic features ſpoke him a celeſ-
" tial.

" With dignity unutterable he ex-
" tends to each an hand; offered to
" us his friendſhip, and vowed an eter-
" nal attachment to our intereſt.
" Led by the heavenly conductor,
" who ſtrewed roſes in our path, we
" traverſed large tracts of land till
" we reached the ſea; when em-
" barking in a ſtately veſſel, we
" were ſoon conveyed to my native
" clime, and there, heaping on us
" wealth and honours, he became
" the guardian of our fate.

" You, my Clara, arrayed in a
" robe of ſpotleſs innocence, me-
" thought preſided over his noble
" manſion, where, united in the
" bonds of love, we all lived bleſt

" and happy, nor felt another pang
" of grief till called to rejoin his
" kindred angels, this heaven-born
" friend forſook his earthly palace.
" ——here ſomething interrupt-
" the courſe of my dream; and
" tranſported at once from the
" chamber of mourning to the tem-
" ple dedicated to Hymen, I beheld
" you aſcending the ſteps of the ſa-
" cred altar, where, met by a youth
" of graceful mien, (and in nothing
" differing from our benefactor but
" in years) you offered up to him
" your virgin heart; and vowing to
" each other unchangeable affection,
" the prieſt joined your hands, cal-
" ling upon the ſpirit of the dear de-
" ceaſed, to witneſs and bleſs your
" nuptials, the heavenly benediction
" ſoon wafted from above, was ec-
" choed by the celeſtial choir, who

" tuning

" tuning their harps to the moſt
" enchanting notes, the dome of
" the ſacred temple reſounded with
" the harmonious ſounds; and as
" they warbled forth your *epithala-*
" *mium*, I awoke from my dream of
" happineſs.—Surely, my child, I
" muſt have ſlept an unſual length
" of time, or how is it poſſible this
" illuſive ſcene could have been ap-
" parently ſo long continued?"

I aſſured him, that the whole time in which the active powers of ſleep had been thus buſy in preſenting to his imagination this intereſting dream, had not at moſt exceeded an hour, which did not ſo much aſtoniſh me, I myſelf as often had, in as ſhort a ſpace, been conveyed over half the world: but the ſubject had in it ſomewhat ſo extraordinary, that

it made the moſt indelible impreſſion on my mind, nor could I the whole day direct my thoughts to any other.

It is impoſſible to define the nature of thoſe ſenſations with which I found myſelf agitated: one minute I thought it certainly prognoſtic of better days; the next, overſhadowed by depreſſion, I interpreted it, as an omen of my beloved parent's being ſoon removed from this vale of miſery; and feared that the heavenly muſicians he had heard chant my *epithalamium*, inſtead of tuning their harps to a nuptial ſong, were welcoming his fleeting ſoul to the abodes of bliſs. Anxiouſly did I long for the return of Dinah, that I might communicate to her my various emotions, and learn her opinion of the

the prophetic viſion; it was then but noon, and at earlieſt I could not expect her back till after ſunſet.

As if buoyed on the wings of ſecret hope, my father ſuſtained his ſpirits throughout the day; he converſed with all the calmneſs of a mind at eaſe, and eat the little repaſt I had prepared for him more with the appetite of a convaleſcent than one, who, but a few hours before had been loſt to every earthly enjoyment.

With pain I beheld this change: for having often heard that death is preceded by unuſual craving, I doubted not but that the *goût* with which he fed was ſurely prognoſtic of approaching diſſolution.

The perturbation of my mind is inconceivable by thoſe who have never felt a ſimilar diſtreſs. Could any one have that day beheld me, I am perſuaded they muſt have judged, from my agitated features, that reaſon had taken its flight.

My eyes turned inceſſantly towards the face of my beloved parent, expecting every minute to behold ſome fatal change: the leaſt alteration of his countenance prejudiced me with the belief that he was going to breathe his expiring ſighs; and though he ſpoke to me frequently with apparent chearfulneſs, the powerful force of fear preſented to my terrified imagination death hovering round his pillow; nor dare I for a moment quit the room, leaſt the grim monarch ſhould, in my abſence,

abſence ſeize his prey, and leave me even deſtitute of a laſt paternal benediction.

Thus paſſed the day in a rapid ſucceſſion of doubts and fears; one minute raiſing my heart in ſilent prayers to Heaven, imploring it to avert the dreaded hour; the next, overcome with deſpair, and ready to ſink on the bed beſide him.

But as the evening approached, my ſpirits began to revive; I ventured to crawl as far as the window to look for Dinah; and after being ſeveral times diſappointed, had the ſatisfaction to ſee her juſt in the ſame ſpot, where, in the morning, I had beheld her in the ſupplicant poſture I have before deſcribed.

As ſhe drew nearer the houſe, I perceived ſhe had ſtill in her hand the bundle I had given her to diſpoſe of.

"Alas! every thing conſpires to "our unhappineſs," ſaid I, "ſhe "cannot meet with a purchaſer;" and overwhelmed with the diſappointment, I burſt into an agony of ſorrow. My father heard the exclamation; but my haſte to let her in, prevented his inquiring whence it aroſe; and imagining that all her walks to Paris were to procure houſhold neceſſaries, had no ſuſpicions of the ſubject which occaſioned it; for to prevent an additional load of grief from falling on his already afflicted heart, I had kept from him the knowledge of our money being expended; and meant to have done ſo ſome time longer,

longer, had it been poſſible to conceal our neceſſitous ſituation.

" Ah ! Dinah," cried I, as I trembling advanced to meet her, " you have been unſucceſsful, and " nothing remains but to ſink under " the burden of our affliction,—but " I hope (while hope almoſt forſook " me) you have not been ſo unfortu- " nate as to bring back the waiſt- " coat alſo ?"

—" No, God be thanked: my " dear young lady, I diſpoſed of " your work to ſuch a noble ſpirited " gentleman, that I had no occa- " ſion to part with theſe," (laying down the parcel, and at the ſame time giving me a paper in which I found twenty louis d'ors).

The ſight almoſt deprived me of power to aſk her what it meant. I looked firſt on her, then upon the gold, and could not articulate a word; but there was no need of interrogations; for the honeſt creature, exhilarated with her good fortune, proceeded to inform me, with a volubility that hardly rendered her intelligible.

"God moſt ſurely heard my "prayers," ſaid ſhe, "or how "ſhould accident have produced ſuch "a generous cuſtomer. I thought, "my dear young lady (who knows, "I do every thing for the beſt, "however it may turn out,) would "not be angry, if I, for once, diſ-"obeyed her orders. So, before I "offered either the work or things "to any one as I uſed to do, I went

"to

" to the hotel de V——, and aſk-
" ing if there were any Engliſh fa-
" milies at that time lodged there,
" was told by an upſtart footman,
" (who ſtaring in my face, perceiv-
" ed I was neither young or hand-
" ſome) that there was; but none
" who would purchaſe any of my
" frippery, ſo I might carry it from
" whence it came.

" Not at all diſconcerted at the
" inſolence of one who knew no bet-
" ter, I addreſſed myſelf to an el-
" derly man in livery who ſtood by;
" and ſaid, I had ſome elegant em-
" broidery to diſpoſe of, if his lady
" would pleaſe to ſee it.

" With great good humour he re-
" plied, he had no lady, but if it was
" what would be equally acceptable

" to gentlemen, he would take it
" to his maſter, who was an admi-
" rer of works of ingenuity, and
" loved to encourage them.

" He took the waiſtcoat from me,
" and carrying it up ſtairs, ſoon re-
" turned to bid me follow him; and
" full of joyful expectation that it
" would prove a more profitable
" journey than I had expected, I
" preſented myſelf before the gentle-
" man, who looked upon me ſo be-
" nevolently, ſo expreſſive of his
" godlike diſpoſition, that if I had
" dared, I could have fallen at his
" feet and worſhipped him."

—" Sit down, my good woman," ſaid he, " I have not yet had time to
" ſurvey half the beauties of your
" merchandize; but it appears
" to

" to me to be the work of ſome
" ſuperior genius; and if your terms
" are not too exorbitant I ſhall
" probably become the purchaſer.
" Have you only this ?"

—" No, ſir, at preſent that's the
" only one."

---" But your daughter or niece,
" (for I ſuppoſe you are not the
" manufacturer yourſelf) can per-
" haps complete ſome more before
" I return to England ?"

—" Alas! ſir, gladly, I am ſure,
" would my poor young lady do it
" (for I have neither the honour
" to be her aunt or mother;) but
" my unhappy maſter, the moſt be-
" loved of parents, is confined to a
" bed of ſickneſs; and what with cry-
" ing

" ing and watching by him, ſhe is
" unable to purſue her work:
" ſhould it pleaſe God to ſpare his
" life and reſtore him ſpeedily to
" health, ſhe will again ſtick to her
" frame, and perhaps might get
" another done by the time you
" want it; for ſhe is very induſ-
" trious, and thinks no labour too
" great; though, God knows, ſhe
" was never accuſtomed to work for
" her ſupport till within theſe few
" months."

" Say you ſo, then indeed I pity
" her; but what unfortunate event
" has reduced her to this neceſ-
" ſity?"

—" Thinking it might do good,
" and could not poſſibly do you any
" harm, I plucked up my ſpirits, and
" told

" told him all about it; what a
" good young lady you was; where
" you lived; how my poor maſter
" loſt his fortune, and the villany
" of the broker who run away with
" what was left; and, laſt of all,
" that driven to the utmoſt extre-
" mity, I was then going to diſpoſe
" of ſome of your cloaths."

—" Dear Dinah, how could you
" do ſo? it was like aſking his af-
" ſiſtance; I cannot bear to think
" of it."

—" No, indeed, miſs, I did not,
" I only told him your ſituation,
" and he yielded it without my
" aſking; for when I came to that
" part about ſelling of your cloaths,
" a tear of pity gliſtened in his eyes;
" and taking out his purſe he put
" the

" the money into my hands, tell-
" ing me he would purchaſe all
" you had leiſure to complete be-
" fore he left the country; and beg-
" ged I would haſten home to com-
" fort you. I hope, my dear miſs
" Clara, you are not angry with
" me;" ſeeing me look ſerious,
" I am ſure I would not have told
" him for the world, if I had thought
" it would give you any unhappi-
" neſs."

—" I believe you would not,
" Dinah; but could wiſh your
" friendly zeal had not induced you to
" be quite ſo communicative, at leaſt
" not to have told him the place of
" our abode. We don't know the
" conſequence of laying ourſelves
" under obligations to a ſtranger,
" a gentleman too; had it been a
" lady

" lady it would not have ſignified
" —ſuppoſe he ſhould come here."

" —Ah! I have done wrong;
" I ſee I have," and the poor crea-
ture began to weep; " but if he
" ſhould come, I can tell him you
" are ill, and then he won't expect
" to ſee you, though indeed he is an
" angel: I would walk ten miles to
" look at him any hour of the
" night."

—" Is he then ſo handſome,
" Dinah? How could you think
" of unfolding our diſtreſſes to a
" ſtranger? Many young men
" would have believed you had ſome
" ſiniſter view in it; who knows
" but thoſe may be his ſentiments;
" and inſtead of being a bleſſing,
" this gold may prove a curſe."

—" But

—"But if a young man might, "he, perhaps, may not; I would "anſwer for his heart, I am ſure; ", there's goodneſs wrote in every "feature of his venerable face; (for "he ſeems older than your father.) "Should you ever ſee him, miſs, "you'll love him as much as I do. "I dare ſay he is now happier than "he has made us, in reflecting on "the good he has done;—ſo pray do "not make yourſelf uneaſy about it. "This money will procure my "poor maſter all the little comforts "he ſtands in need of—pay the rent "—ſave you from the neceſſity of "parting with your cloaths, and do "a world of uſeful things beſide."

Thus ran ſhe on, and might have talked for hours, had not the mention of my father, broke the train of my

my diſagreeable reflections; for, recollecting his dream, a crowd of ideas ruſhed inſtantly on my mind; and I began to think this ſeaſonable relief was abſolutely a gift ſent from Heaven, and as ſuch it was my duty to receive it without endeavouring to leſſen its eſtimation by the chimeras of ſuſpicion.

The earneſtneſs of our diſcourſe having alarmed my father, he faintly called out, to know if any thing had happened; and before I had reſolved in what manner to break the ſubject to him, Dinah anticipating the pleaſure he would receive from the relation, ran headlong into his room, and, in five minutes, had told the whole ſtory of her good luck, with the ſame volubility ſhe had delivered it to me.

"Heaven

"Heaven be thanked," cried he, as ſoon as ſhe had finiſhed; "did I "not tell thee, my child, that this "dream portended ſome unexpected "bleſſing. Your pious endeavours "to add to our little pittance has "not been unobſerved by me, "though you have ſo cautiouſly "concealed it; and the event ſhews, "that your induſtry was as pleaſ-"ing in the eyes of that beneficent "Being, (who delights in virtue and "rewards it,) as grateful to the "heart of your poor father who "glories more in ſuch a daughter, "then all the riches the world could "give him. Yes, I ſhall ſtill ſee you "happy; ſomething whiſpers me "our ſufferings are over; and "though it ſhould pleaſe the Al-"mighty Diſpoſer of our lives in-"ſtantly to call me hence, I ſhould

"de-

" depart in peace; ſo firm is my
" reliance, that he who never de-
" ſerts the virtuous but for a time,
" will raiſe you up a friend. Bleſ-
" ſed be the minute when this faith-
" ful creature was inſpired with
" the happy thought of making
" known our unhappineſs to the be-
" nevolent Chriſtian who has ſo
" generouſly contributed to our ne-
" ceſſities. Ah! has ſhe not ful-
" filled the firſt part of my dream;
" and the latter, I doubt not, is near
" to its accompliſhment. For does
" not the ſun indeed begin to ſhine
" on us?"

Dinah knew not what dream my father alluded to; but to ſee him ſo ſatisfied with her conduct, and ſeemingly ſo much better both in health and ſpirits than when ſhe left him in

the

the morning, was quite beſide herſelf with joy.

All the evening did ſhe expatiate on the happy conſequences that might enſue. An angel could never act but as one, and if ever angel appeared in human ſhape, it ſurely was this generous man! The greateſt part of the night was elapſed before we left the chamber of my father, who felt himſelf ſo much amended that he would ſuffer neither of us to watch by him; and quitting him with much reluctance, I diſmiſſed my talkative companion, and on my pillow began to ruminate on the various turns of fate.

Shall I own to you, my Gertrude, that I did not feel half that ſatisfaction which might have been expected

from this unhoped for aſſiſtance. Alas! are there not in the world numerous libertines, who, under the cloak of benevolence, ſeek to gratify every unruly paſſion of their hearts? —We knew not the character of our benefactor. Time was repreſented old; but even age is not always a ſecurity for virtue: for are there not ſeducers in every ſtage of life? If vice has once taken up its abode in the mind of man, it ſeldom deſerts its throne till death cloſes the ſcene of guilt. Could I have been perſuaded that the ſame liberality would have been practiſed, had not Dinah ſo partially delineated the inconſiderable merits of her adored miſtreſs, I ſhould have experienced more ſerenity; but the inſult I had received from young Van Budel was too recent on my mind not to impreſs me with

with the moſt unfavourable ideas of the deceptious ſex: and ſhould theſe fears be realized, (ſince he knew the place of our abode) what perſecutions might I not have cauſe to dread, if my little ſhare of perſonal attractions ſhould happen to engage his attention.

In theſe unpleaſing reflections, I wore away the hours till the return of day; and in my own mind had almoſt determined not to break into more of the money than what I judged to be the value of my labour (however preſſing our wants) till better aſſured I ſhould have no cauſe to regret the obligation. But it is now time to throw aſide my pen, as all I have to relate will far exceed the bounds of a letter. To-morrow I will reſume the ſubject, and preſent

to

to my deareſt friend, the portrait of him I ſo greatly injured, when I confounded him with the multitude who harbour vices under the guard of virtue, and make charity the cloak of ſin. Would I could perſonally preſent him; but ſhould that happineſs never be permitted in this world, in future ages, when my Gertrude is tranſlated to a purer ſtate of bliſs, ſhe will diſcern him among her kindred angels where he will be as conſpicuous among the bleſt, as pre-eminent among men.

Adieu, my love, my hand is cramped with writing; but never would it be tired of aſſuring you, how eſtimable is your friendſhip to the heart of

Your affectionate

CLARA.

LETTER XII.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I HAVE a thouſand ſubjects on which I wiſh to write, yet in the ſmall limits of even the largeſt ſheet of paper, can hardly find room for one. Would to Heaven we were not thus diſtantly ſeparated, that I might fly on the wings of expedition, to communicate, to conſult, and hold ſweet converſe with my friend.

Since I concluded my laſt, I have been alarmed beyond expreſſion; and but for the interpoſition of Providence

dence and the beſt of men, had been a prey to the blackeſt villany.—— That wretch! the vile Van Budel—but his name contaminates my pen—let it then die, till after having exhauſted every other ſubject, I reſume it to contraſt his conduct with that of my reſpectable deliverer.

But as I have not yet introduced to you the latter more than from the deſcriptions of Dinah, it will be neceſſary to be methodical; I ſhall therefore proceed in my relations of the event which ſucceeded her auſpicious journey to Paris, as if nothing had interrupted the thread of our diſcourſe.

About a week afterwards (during which interval my dear father had ſurpriſingly recovered his ſtrength)

having one afternoon fatigued my eyes with poring over my work, by way of relaxation, and ſenſible it would give him pleaſure, I ſat down to my harpſichord, and played one of thoſe charming hymns you learnt me when at B—.

While in the midſt of the third verſe, Dinah (who was ſeated near the window) ſuddenly ſpringing from her chair, and overturning every thing in her way through her haſte to reach the door, exclaimed in accents of the moſt lively joy,

"Aye, there he is, it is he himſelf. "I thought ſo all the way he came "up the walk;—but now I am "ſure of it: ſee, he's liſtening to "the muſic." There needed no more explanation to inform us who

ſhe meant; thoſe natural effuſions of a grateful heart, at once announced our benefactor.

It would have been in vain to have checked her eagerneſs to welcome him. We had only time to retire into the adjoining room, before anticipating his wiſhes of admittance, ſhe had opened to him the door.

"Well, my good woman," ſaid he, (for we could diſtinctly hear what paſſed) "how is the poor gen-
"tleman your maſter? I was walk-
"ing this way, and the wiſh of
"hearing he was better, induced me
"to look in as I went by. Since I
"ſaw you laſt, I have been think-
"ing he might perhaps ſtand in
"need of ſome medical aſſiſtance,

" and if he does I have a friend in
" the phyſical line at Paris, who, at
" my requeſt would be happy to
" attend him. If you think he is
" able to bear company, and will not
" be diſpleaſed at the viſit of a
" ſtranger, inform your young lady
" that I ſhould eſteem it a favour to
" be admitted to the chamber of her
" father;—but tell her it is an old
" man, who requeſts the happineſs
" of being introduced to ſuffering
" merit; or probably her delicacy
" may be alarmed."

This conſiderate ſpeech ſo truly expreſſive of the goodneſs of the heart of him who uttered it, at once drove every foul ſuſpicion from my breaſt. I waited not for the delivery of his meſſage, but inſtantly throwing open the parlour

lour-door preſented myſelf before him, and indeed was ſo ſtruck with his venerable appearance, and was ſo much impreſſed with gratitude for his humanity, that it was with difficulty I could aſſure him my father would think himſelf honoured by ſuch attention.

" Pardon me, my dear young " lady, for thus intruding on your " privacy; the motive will, I hope, " apologize for the act: from this " good woman, who to the zeal of " a domeſtic, ſeems to unite the " tenderneſs of a friend, I learnt " that you was leſs happy than you " deſerved to be; but that the ill- " neſs of a beloved parent was your " greateſt ſource of ſorrow. This " relation was ſufficient to intereſt " me in your fate; and I could not

" make myſelf eaſy till I had per-
" ſonally offered him thoſe ſervices
" which his unhappy ſituation may
" probably require; he is not worſe,
" I hope, than when your ſervant
" gave me this account?"

—" Our gratitude cannot equal
" this condeſcending goodneſs ſir,
" —No, thank Heaven, he is much
" better, and will, I hope, continue
" ſo. The injuſtice of a cruel world
" has contributed much more to
" weaken his conſtitution than any
" particular diſorder—(for I find,
" you know our ſtory); but the
" pity of one ſympathizing ſoul has
" in a great meaſure, obliterated
" from his thought the inhumanity
" of a multitude; and from the day
" in which he was informed of your
" generous attention to the tale of

" our

" our unhappineſs, he has hourly " recoverd both his health and ſpi- " rits." In ſaying this, I conducted him to my father, who, impatient to welcome the friend he believed ſent by Heaven to our relief, had riſen from his ſeat to receive him, and was making a feeble effort to advance towards the door; but want of ſtrength added to his ſtrong emotions of gratitude, prevented him from moving farther than the adjoining chair; and thoſe of pitying ſenſibility, operating as powerfully on the heart of our noble viſitor, it was ſome minutes before either of them could give utterance to their feelings.

What a luxuriant portrait would this ſcene have afforded to thoſe children of Humanity, who, poſſeſ-

ſing the milk of human kindneſs, are more attracted by an exhibition of kindred ſentiments, than the fineſt efforts of art, on a ſubject in which their paſſions are unintereſted.

Never will it be baniſhed from my remembrance. Picture to yourſelf, my dear Gertrude, on one ſide afflicted virtue bending under the weight of its oppreſſions, yet illumined by a ray of hope, inarticulately aiming to expreſs its gratitude to the benevolent Source. On the other, dove-eyed Pity labouring to give utterance to the ſympathetic effuſions of a heart anxious to redreſs them; and exulting only in its ſuperiority from the power of conferring happineſs. Whatever was wanting in words was here made up in expreſſion:—

Gra-

Gratitude and benevolence were never more ſtrongly portrayed, than in the continuance of each.

A friendly preſſure of the hand was, for ſome time, the only ſalutation on either ſide. My father ſunk upon the chair on which he had leant; the ſtranger ſeated himſelf on the adjoining one, and both pointing to another, ſilently preſſed me to ſit down by them.

At length the former reſuming his ſpeech.—"How kind, how ſuſcep-
" tible of others woes muſt be the
" heart which urges its poſſeſſor to
" ſeek what moſt men fly from.

" Diſtreſs ſeeks them—but few men ſeek
" diſtreſs.

" excuſe me, ſir, if deficient of

" terms to expreſs how much I feel
" this favour."

—" Call it not ſo, I beſeech you
" my dear ſir ;—it is I who am fa-
" voured by Heaven in being per-
" mitted the ſatisfaction of allevi-
" ating thoſe ills which no regrets
" will now redreſs. The goods of this
" world are valuable but in propor-
" tion to the power they afford us
" of being ſerviceable to others.
" The only pleaſure ſuperior to that
" of aſſiſting a man of merit, is to
" know he does not need our ſer-
" vices, but doubtleſs for ſome wiſe
" purpoſe, our lives were deſigned
" by nature to be chequered, ſince
" even

" The beſt of men have their intervals of grief :

" though I have not the happineſs
" to

" to be perſonally known to you, I
" truſt you will give me credit for
" my good intentions. Accident
" diſcovered to me the recent in-
" juries you have ſuſtained by a
" fraudulent deprivation of your
" fortune, and your unhappy ſitu-
" ation in conſequence of that loſs.
" It was enough that you was un-
" fortunate, to engage my pity and
" aſſiſtance; but when afterwards
" from ſome indirect inquiries, I
" learnt that you was of a family with
" whom I was once united in the
" ſtrongeſt bonds of friendſhip; the
" deſire of transferring it to the
" only ſurvivor among them, be-
" came too predominant for me to
" remain eaſy, till I had procured
" myſelf the ſatisfaction of a perſo-
" nal introduction. You was young
" when your elder brother firſt

" entered

" entered into the ſervice of his
" country, and perhaps have forgot
" the friend who ſhared with him
" his honours in his firſt campaign.
" In the ſecond he bravely fell;
" and not being recalled to England
" till ſome years after the death of
" your parents, my acquaintance with
" every part of the family from that
" time ceaſed: once, indeed, after I
" came to the poſſeſſion of a title and
" eſtate I had during my martial
" engagements but little expect-
" ation would ever devolve to me,
" (as I was the youngeſt of a nu-
" merous progeny), I heard by
" accident that the only remaining
" brother of my deceaſed compa-
" nion was then ſtationed at Bruſ-
" ſels, and an honour to his profeſ-
" ſion. But as I had quitted the
" paths of fame for thoſe of domeſ-

" tic

" tic quiet, and the peaceable en-
" joyment of a plentiful fortune, I
" had little thoughts of ever be-
" coming more intimately acquaint-
" ed with his worth than by the
" herald of report.

—" A ſeries of years has chang-
" ed the face of every thing: a
" good conſtitution united to a tem-
" perate enjoyment of the goods of
" this world, has preſerved me the
" bleſſings of longevity, (if to out-
" live our moſt valuable friends can
" be called one): but I ſee around
" me none that ſerve to remind me of
" the pleaſures of my juvenile days;
" and I came here more for the ſake
" of retracing thoſe ſteps I once
" trod with the ſanguine pleaſures
" of youth, than in compliance to
" the advice of my phyſicians, who

" recom-

" recommended the climate as more
" ſalutary to thoſe bodily infirmities
" which I find creeping gradual-
" ly upon me, (a proof that the
" moſt robuſt muſt in time yield
" their powers); judge then if it
" muſt not give me the ſincereſt ſa-
" tisfaction to meet (where I leaſt
" expected ſuch an happineſs) the
" ſurvivor of a family in which I
" paſſed ſome of the happieſt days
" of childhood. The pleaſure I ſhall
" find in your ſociety, will more
" than compenſate for any ſervices
" I can render you. I propoſed a
" ſpeedy return to England, having
" been ſome months abſent; but I
" ſhall now be in no hurry to quit a
" place in which I have received an
" increaſe of felicity."

It

It is eaſy to imagine, my dear Gertrude, that this polite introduction, which preceded the generous friendſhip of this reſpectable old man added a double grace to the offer, ſince it was meant to remove the weight of the obligation; but it was not difficult for me to diſcover, that he acted more from the natural benevolence of a diſpoſition prone to ſympathize with the unfortunate, than from any former connexions with our family; though a delicacy of mind, unknown to many who practiſe the virtues of humanity, prompted him to adopt it as a motive.

In the character of a brother's friend, many little ſervices could be offered, which from a ſtranger might wound the heart they were meant to re-

relieve: could any thing then have been better planned to procure them a ready acceptance? I make no doubt but the whole tablets of memory had been turned by this amiable philanthropiſt to procure teſtimonials of our being entitled to his kindneſs, more than from the uſual claims of the unfortunate upon the humane: for above five and forty years had elapſed ſince the intimacy alluded to, and though probably ſuch a perſon might have been the companion of the elder Villeroy's firſt campaign, it was a circumſtance paſt the recollection of my father.

It, however, anſwered the intended purpoſe; the uſual reſtraint which accompanies a viſit of benevolence gradually wore off; we ſoon converſed with the eaſe of long-known

known friends, and every particular of our unhappy ſituation was communicated without reſerve. Devoid of any of that embarraſſment which the preſence of a being of ſuperior rank generally inſpires, I ſoon felt myſelf as compoſed as if we had been all inhabitants of the ſame humble roof; and while he condeſcendingly partook with us our afternoon's repaſt, contemplated his venerable features with the ſame ſerene ſatisfaction I ever do my father's, when unclouded with the gloom of ſorrow.

When the evening approached our noble viſitor departed, but not without requeſting the happineſs of being a frequent gueſt: and as I attended him to the door, whiſpered me, that he ſhould on the morrow, take

take the liberty of ſending his phyſician, whoſe preſcriptions he doubted not would be efficacious in the recovery of his friend; and ſlipping into my hand a preſent more conſiderable than the former which he had ſent us by Dinah, begged I would without any regard to the expence, procure him whatever was neceſſary in ſuch a languid ſtate.

This injunction would have been punctually complied with (as it was impoſſible to have laid upon me any one ſo conducive to my felicity), but his own generous precautions rendered it unneceſſary; for the next morning came two ſervants laden with wine, chocolate cakes, jellies, and in ſhort every ſpecies of nouriſhment adapted to the weak appetite of an invalid; and a few hours after-

afterwards appeared alſo the gentleman he had mentioned, who having made the uſual enquiries, pronounced his patient devoid of all dangerous ſymptoms; and recommending a proper regimen, and now and then a chearful glaſs to recruit his ſpirits, with the addition of ſome reſtorative medicines, left me much happier than I had been for ſome months paſt, in the pleaſing expectation of ſeeing the moſt affectionate of parents very ſoon reſtored to life's firſt bleſſing.

A day did not elapſe without our receiving ſome freſh proof of attention from this moſt liberal of friends; and frequently would he paſs whole hours in our ſociety, declaring that he experienced more calm ſerenity under our humble roof, than

than he had ever done in the moſt ſplendid manſion. Nothing was neglected that could contribute to the recovery of my father; and, as to myſelf, every thing that could tend to enliven my ſtate of ſolitude was procured for my amuſement; every new publication was regularly tranſmitted me as ſoon as it appeared; and finding me a proficient in the muſical line, a continual ſucceſſion of the moſt eſteemed compoſitions accompanied thoſe literary preſents. Our little cottage began to wear an air of elegance; not a corner of it but what diſplayed ſome token of our benefactor's liberality; and what heightened the value of his favours was, that the manner in which they were conferred, would have left an indifferent ſpectator at a loſs to diſ-

diſtinguiſh the perſon moſt obliged.

If ever I was vain of my little abilities, it was in finding them conducive to the amuſement, and worthy the eulogiums of this beneficent man, who to the dignity of grey hairs, adds all the entertaining qualities of the moſt ſprightly youth; inſtead of inſpiring me with the uſual laſſitude attendant on the ſociety of old age, never abſents himſelf a day from our retreat; but the loſs of his converſation produces a diminution of our felicity, and is not more ſenſibly felt by my father than myſelf.

At the time I received my Gertrude's long anticipated letter, her inexplicable ſilence was the only reflection

flection which annoyed my felicity. My beloved parent reſtored to health, free from the apprehenſions of approaching want by the moſt generous benefactions of our noble friend; what but that could throw a cloud upon my ſpirits, or empoiſon the ſweets I then began to taſte, after a deprivation which gave double poignancy to every enjoyment.

Your affectionate epiſtle was the moſt delightful addition to my felicity; for who, my dear, could be more bleſt than her, who from the melancholy proſpect of ſoon becoming a wretched orphan, devoid of friends, devoid of any aſylum to hide her unhappy head, finds herſelf at once in the poſſeſſion of a double portion of parental affection, and beloved by the perſon whoſe friendſhip is more ineſtimable

eſtimable to her heart than it is poſſible to expreſs?

The only regret I experienced was, that the diſtance which our deſtinies had placed between us, would probably never more permit me to enjoy with you the dear delights of ſocial intercourſe; and that we muſt alſo one day loſe the ſociety of our venerable friend, whoſe departure, though retarded by his increaſing attachment to ours, was ſtill an event that muſt ſpeedily take place; as it was impoſſible to indulge the idea that he would ſacrifice to adventitious friendſhip the ſatisfaction of paſſing his declining days in the country which gave him birth.

Though he had acknowledged himſelf in poſſeſſion of a title, to

avoid the ceremony and parade ever attendant on the pompous ſound, he had been known at Paris by no other appellation than that of Monſieur D—; and though his liberality to every one around him, ſpoke his fortune to be as unlimited as his generoſity, he ſeemed to experience a peculiar ſatisfaction in a temporary exemption from thoſe empty honours which ſo many covet.

His domeſticks grown grey in his ſervice, were the beſt teſtimonies of his amiable diſpoſition; for though age had rendered them almoſt uſeleſs, he never diſcovered the leaſt trifling diſcontent at their want of ability to perform their neceſſary functions; but on any little omiſſion or apparent ſigns of negligence, he would exclaim with the benignity of

an

an angel (though perhaps they had delayed the execution of his orders far beyond the protracted time), "I "wiſh they were come—but, alas! "poor fellows, though the mind is "willing, the fleſh is weak;—can "I expect them to fly, who cannot "run myſelf?"

Whenever he paſſed a day with us he generally came unattended, and ordered one of his ſervants to fetch him in the evening; as he ever gave the preference to walking when the weather would admit of it; but as the ſtrength of my father returned, believing that the exerciſe of a carriage would be beneficial to his health, he began to alter his plan, and once or twice a week paid us a viſit in his coach, purpoſely to

have the pleaſure of indulging him in what he judged ſo efficacious.

In ſome of theſe airings I accompanied them; and to that alone, my Gertrude, may I attribute the misfortune alluded to in the beginning of my letter.

We had been about ſix weeks bleſt with the friendſhip of this worthy man (whom indeed I began to eſteem with an affection almoſt filial, and his for your Clara, I will venture to affirm, was as truly paternal); when in one of our drives round the environs of Paris, our carriage paſſed another, in which was the wretch who had inſulted me with his odious love. I felt myſelf in ſuch emotions at the ſight of him, (as much I believe, from the recollection of his hu-

humiliating propoſals, as apprehenſions of future danger) that all the afternoon I could not reſume my ſpirits; nor could the united endearments of my father and Monſieur D—\ſooth me to compoſure, though both aſſured me they did not believe I had attracted his attention, as we drove too rapidly for me to be obſerved, unleſs I had ſat on the ſide next my enemy; and ſhould he happen to have noticed me, I had nothing to dread while under their protection.

It wasin vain I attempted to be chearful, notwithſtanding theſe aſſurances; a ſtrange preſentiment that this rencontre would be productive of ſome diſagreeable event, from that inſtant took poſſeſſion of my thoughts, nor was it poſſible for me

to direct them to any other ſubject: yet ſo capricious was my fate, that though forewarned, I was not ſufficiently forearmed to ward the impending blow; nor could any thing but a miracle wrought in my favour, have ſaved me from deſtruction.

Some few evenings ago, after our noble friend had taken leave of us, at his uſual hour, perceiving that my father was engaged in the peruſal of an entertaining production, I left him in the enjoyment of his book, and ſtole up to my chamber to converſe with my deareſt Gertrude, anxious to finiſh a packet from which I was conſcious ſhe would derive the pureſt ſatisfaction; for, by the tender ſympathy you diſcovered in our afflictions, it was not difficult, my dear,

dear, to ſuggeſt how ſincerely you would rejoice in our happineſs.

I had juſt taken up my pen, and was beginning to addreſs you, when Dinah came hurrying into the room, and almoſt breathleſs, told me there was a poor woman lay on the other ſide of the yew hedge, at the bottom of the garden, who ſeemed to be dying for want of nouriſhment.

"It would grieve your heart, "miſs, to hear how piteouſly ſhe "groans."

It was unneceſſary to add more to one not totally devoid of humanity; and laying aſide my writing, I haſtily threw a ſhawl over my ſhoulders, and running with her to the ſpot,

did not even ſpeak to my father as I paſſed.

The caſe appeared juſt as ſhe had deſcribed it: a poor creature ſeemingly half famiſhed lay upon the ground; and through exceſs of weakneſs was hardly able to give an anſwer to the queſtions which I put to her; but the few words ſhe could articulate was to expreſs a deſire of ſomething to drink.

"Run, dear Dinah, quickly to "the houſe," cried I, "and get a "tumbler of wine and water; "that will do the poor woman more "good than any thing I can think "of, and I will ſtay by her till you "come back."

The

The garden, you muſt obſerve, my dear, is a long ſlip of ground that runs ſome diſtance from our cottage; and out of the hedge alluded to, is cut a little avenue to the adjoining field.

I was on the outſide of the gate, which Dinah, in her haſte to procure the propoſed refreſhment had flung after her with ſuch force, that the lock having ſhot from the bolt, faſtened of itſelf; and as ſhe had the key in her pocket, I was ſhut out of the garden till ſhe returned to let me in.

Without ſuſpecting the miſchief in agitation, I ſtood very compoſedly by the hedge, gazing with an eye of pity on the miſerable object before me, when in an inſtant, ſpring-

ing from her abject poſture, the treacherous wretch, throwing ſomething over my head which ſtifled my ſhrieks, caught me in her arms, and being joined by an accomplice, they hurried me acroſs the field; my fright depriving me of the power to make reſiſtance, and thruſting me into a chaiſe, jumped into it themſelves and drove off as faſt as they could go.

My head was ſtill incloſed in the wrapper they had thrown over me; but when they ſuppoſed I was out of the hearing of thoſe who would attempt my reſcue, they reſtored me to the light, and deſiring me to compoſe myſelf, aſſured me I was in honourable hands.

Such

Such a prophanation of the term deprived me of all patience; but conſcious that invectives would avail me nothing, I only calmly aſked the wretches where they were carrying me, and by whoſe commands they acted.

"In anſwer to your firſt queſtion, "madam," ſaid one of the monſters, "we are conveying you from the "arms of debility and old age, to "thoſe of youth and vigour; a "change you will have no cauſe to "regret: but as to the ſecond, we "are not at preſent permitted to "anſwer you."

He had hardly pronounced this vile ſentence before the horſes were ſuddenly arreſted in their courſe, and to my unſpeakable aſtoniſhment, I

beheld Monſieur D— at the ſide of the chaiſe.

Ah! thought I, then I am undone; this imaginary angel is at laſt a fiend in human form, and dropping on my knees, I implored Heaven to protect my innocence; yet did not this ſurmiſe the leaſt correſpond with what the villain had juſt advanced:—but fright deprives one of the power to make reaſonable reflections.

What reproaches did I now make my heart for even this momentary ſuſpenſion of my good opinion, when I heard that reſpectable friend bid the drivers at their peril proceed any farther; and aided by two of his ſervants, beheld him attempting my deliverance

deliverance at the hazard of his life.

All efforts would, I am perſuaded, have been ineffectual, (for what chance had they with men of ſuch ſuperior ſtrength) if recollecting that gold diſarms as well as arms; he had now promiſed them a reward more than equal to what they were to receive from their employer; and to ſtrengthen his promiſes immediately gave them his gold watch and what money and other valuables he had then about him.

This at once effected his purpoſe; they quietly ſuffered me to be lifted out of the chaiſe, mutually agreeing to ſay, that I had been reſcued by ſuperior force; and owning it was in the ſervice of the vile Van Budel they

they were engaged, ſubmiſſively begged my pardon for the part they had taken in his crime.

Giving them his word, that he would remit them the promiſed ſum (through a channel they themſelves propoſed) my kind deliverer led me to his coach; and being in ſome degree recovered from the agitation into which my fears had thrown me, as ſoon as he was ſeated I enquired by what fortunate means I had met with ſuch unexpected ſuccour, when it was almoſt impoſſible he ſhould have known of my misfortune; and eagerly added, "how "diſtreſſed muſt be my poor father "when Dinah informed him of this "outrage!"

"That

—"That God, my dear Clara, "who protects the good, has in this "inſtance peculiarly favoured both; "for I hope he does not even ſuſ- "pect the danger you have been in. "I had got almoſt half way to Pa- "ris, little expecting the ſcene of "knight errantry that was to fol- "low, when recollecting ſome pa- "pers I had left on your harpſi- "chord which I might want before "my next viſit, I bid the men turn "about, and juſt as I reached the "ſide of the field which leads to- "wards the houſe, I perceived Di- "nah running with the moſt incre- "dible ſwiftneſs down the contrary "road. Aſtoniſhed at this pheno- "menon, for, like myſelf, her fly- "ing days are over, I forboded all "was not as it ſhould be; and in- "ſtead of going to the houſe, drove

after

" after her down the lane, and over-
" took the poor creature juſt as ſhe
" was obliged to relax her pace,
" from want of ſtrength."

—" Oh! ſir, Oh! my poor young
" lady.—They have this minute
" taken her away; how ſhall I ever
" look my poor maſter in the face
" again; for it was I brought on
" him this misfortune."

" I ſtaid not to enquire the ſource
" of theſe ſelf-reproaches; but ga-
" thering from her that Mr. Ville-
" roy as yet knew nothing of the
" affair, and that it was not above
" a minute ſince the chaiſe had
" diſappeared from her eyes, in
" which they had carried away her
" dear miſtreſs, I deſired her to ſtay
" where ſhe was, and we ſhould per-

" haps

" haps be able to bring you back, be-
" fore you was either of you miſſed
" from the houſe. We then purſued
" you with a rapidity that ſoon over-
" took your raviſhers;—the reſt,
" my dear, you know; and now
" let me hear by what means you
" fell into their hands."

I then recounted the ſtratagem by which I had been deluded out of the garden, and every other particular, only ſuppreſſing the anſwer which had been made to my enquiries, where they were conveying me;—and both of us ejaculated our thanks for this providential deliverance.

As I had not been carried much above half a mile before overtaken by Monſieur D—, we ſoon reached the ſpot where Dinah had been left; and

and her joy at ſeeing me returned, is inconceivable; it was with difficulty we could moderate her tranſports, ſo as to get an intelligible reply to any queſtions we aſked her. Finding, however, that ſhe had not been in doors, we judged it beſt for me to leave the coach, and walk back through the garden, as we came, leaſt the fright of ſeeing me ſo brought home ſhould have ſome diſagreeable effect upon my father, whoſe health was not ſo perfectly re-eſtabliſhed as not to be in danger of ſuſtaining an injury from a too ſudden agitation of mind.

We found him ſtill attentively engaged with his book; nor had the leaſt ſuſpicion but I had been all the time above. In a few minutes the carriage of our friend was heard

at

at the gate; my father went out to meet him, wondering what could have induced a ſecond viſit ſo late in the evening, and not much more than an hour ſince he had left us; but the paper being mentioned as a reaſon, all was well; and it was not till the next day he was informed of the danger I had been in; for to conceal the effect it had taken upon my ſpirits, I complained of a little indiſpoſition, and retired early to my chamber; but during my ſhort intervals of ſleep, lived over the terrifying ſcene again, and awoke as unrefreſhed as if I had never been in bed. I found that when Dinah brought the wine and water, not ſeeing either myſelf or the object of our charity, ſhe had looked around the field, and beheld me dragged along between the vile impoſtor and

his accomplice, which terrified her to that exceſs, that fortunately giving way to her wiſhes of recovering me, rather than her prudence, ſhe immediately ran after them; by which means ſhe luckily ſaved my father from diſtreſs of mind, and encountered our noble friend, whoſe attempts to overtake me, might, a very little later, happened to have proved fruitleſs.

Nothing could exceed the aſtoniſhment of my father when informed of this event; he looked firſt at me, then at Monſieur D—, as if incredulous; but when convinced it was no illuſion, expreſſed great uneaſineſs for my future ſafety, declaring that he thought our preſent retreat no longer a place of ſecurity, and it would be better to remove.

We

We have as yet determined on no other; but ſuch a deſign is in agitation, and our benefactor is looking out for one where there is leſs danger of my being again expoſed to the inſults of wanton paſſion; as a guard, two of his ſervants will in the mean time ſleep at our cottage.

How is it poſſible Van Budel ſhould have diſcovered our abode I cannot imagine, ſince no one viſits us but Monſieur D—, and he is ſo little known at Paris, that I ſhould ſuppoſe his frequent excurſions to our cottage could have attracted no obſervation.

Yet what could the wretches mean, when they ſaid I was going from the arms of debility to youth? Did they mean from parental affection; or

or did their vile hearts ſuggeſt any thing unfavourable to the honour of your perſecuted Clara?

Surely they did not dare to ſuppoſe our connexion with this good old man of an unworthy nature? Yet what elſe could they think from ſuch a ſtrange inference! I am quite bewildered with my reflections, and loſt in a continual whirl of thought, can no longer enjoy the bleſſings we poſſeſs, or look forward with pleaſure to the future. I long to make my father participate my diſtreſſing ideas, yet cannot have the courage to communicate them. Write to me, my Gertrude, by your tender conſolations ſooth my perturbated mind, and tell me all you think. I cannot explain to you the nature of my fears ſo readily, as your delicacy will teach

you to ſuggeſt them; to prove that of which one is conſcious, is it neceſſary to ſpurn a bleſſing evidently ſent by Heaven to brighten the laſt days of a tender parent? Surely not; but a ſelf-approving heart is no teſtimonial of innocence in the eyes of a malignant world, however ſatisfactory in thoſe of God: gladly would I appear unſpotted in the ſight of both.—But that vile inference! it quite depreſſes me. Adieu, my dear, I believe it unneceſſary to apologize for the the length of my letters: convinced that you are intereſted in learning the minuteſt incident which is connected with the fate of

Your affectionate

CLARA.

End of Vol. I.